

THE MUSLIM VIEW OF SECULARISM

▲ THE HEART OF SECULARISM

Muslims can hardly talk of secularism without talking simultaneously about government, Christianity and the West. They are constantly mentioned together for the simple reason that historically they have come together and worked together. With some misgivings I have separated the subject(s) of Christianity and the West from this chapter by allotting them a chapter of their own; they are difficult to separate from secularism. The issues of Islam, government and politics are even less separable. So I have given up on trying to separate them into chapters. The arrangement would be too artificial. I confess that even now the other chapter divisions leave something to be desired. It is difficult to cut up a seamless robe and retain any resemblance of the integrity of the parts.

This chapter presents the view of secularism held by both Fundamentalists and mainstream Islam in Nigeria. K. A. Balogun adduces some dictionary statements on the subject. It means “(1) worldly or material; (2) not religious or spiritual. Secularism is the

view that morality and education should not be based on religion.” He suggests a second definition: “non-adoption of a state religion.” This he describes as “a more positive platform whereby the government recognizes the existence of religion and the spirituality of the people without necessarily taking an official position either in its favour or against it.” Here people are free to adopt and practice the religion of their own choosing. “This system does not of necessity encourage people to be religionless.”¹

Basically, according to Ado-Kurawa, “secularism is the separation of the worldly from the spiritual.” He identifies at least three other important features of secularism. First, the supremacy of reason over divine revelation. Secondly, “the subordination of religion to temporal authority.” Thirdly, the elevation of material fulfillment over spiritual needs. Even though it is not necessarily atheistic, secularism was “influenced by social, political and philosophical theories that are actually anti-religious.”²

Ibraheem Sulaiman³ describes the “secular attitude” as one that “tends to ignore all matters pertaining to God and seeks to build a system of life and an attitude of mind that is distrustful of God.” Elsewhere, he writes, “Secularism is simply an attempt to run a society on a basis other than religion.”⁴

Musa Sulaiman—notice the different first name—describes secularism as an attempt “to reconstruct society without reference to God or future life. The emphasis is primarily on one’s happiness in this material world.” One of its main objectives is the “deconsecration of values by rendering morality relative and questionable.” It promotes the “desacralization of politics,” a fancy term for the separation of politics and religion. Sulaiman ends his discussion with the sad observation that “virtually every sector of our life is being secularised.”⁵

Banu Az-Zubair has recently written a lengthy paper that has circulated the world via e-mail. It is significant enough to attach it as Appendix 1. However, with the second part of the paper emphasizing

sharia, I attach only the first part to this monograph. Since you have access to his own words, I restrict myself to the following comments of his. He considers the discussions in Nigeria as a “robust manifestation of an evolving democracy” and suggests that “the principles that should guide all concerned” are those of “fairness, due consideration and love of peace. It is with these principles in mind that I address the issues of secularism, Shariah and the Nigerian Constitution.”

Stating the obvious, he emphasizes that Nigerians are a “deeply religious people and our religious belief is a fundamental part of our individual and collective identity.” In this environment, religion and politics cannot be separated according to the dualistic scheme of the secular and the spiritual. Islam and Christianity are alike in this respect, except that the latter has deviated from its roots and has undergone secular transformation. He interprets secularism as the “negation of anything with spiritual essence. It is the preservation of vanity and the destruction of virtue—the opposite of sanctity.” He asks, “But why did our founding fathers choose federalism? What is the link between the state and secularism?”

Since Hausa has no term for “secularism” or its derivatives and synonyms, the anonymous author of a Hausa-language article in *Nasiha*⁶ created his own: “*sekkulanci*.” It being an unfamiliar word in Hausa, the author explains it several times in the article to mean, “secularism (the separation of religion and politics).”⁷ He attributes a range of meanings to the term. “In summary,” he writes, “secularism means: (1) To give a church leader permission to pass by the church and be at ease, while he dislodges religion; (2) The church has its properties such as their schools or hospitals, forcefully appropriated by the government; (3) Religion plays no role in the lives of people.”⁸

Awwal Hamisu Yadudu put it this way:

Secularism or secularization of society and its institutions is a political arrangement which is predicated on the twin understandings that (a) there shall be a separation between church

*and state and (b) that religion shall have no relevance and must be confined only to the private life of individuals. Consequently, public affairs shall in no way be influenced by religion.*⁹

Husaini Hassan views the essence of secularism to be the separation of church and state. It divides life into two compartments. In the one, the church, spiritual and moral forces operate. In the state, policies rest on the power of security institutions.¹⁰

Another anonymous author in *Nasiha* comments on democracy. Neither Arabic nor Hausa had that word until they borrowed it from English. In Hausa it emerged as “*dimokuradiya*.” English, on the other hand, has no word for “*siyasa*,” a term usually translated as “politics.” The problem is that “politics” carries a secular meaning, while “*siyasa*” is so closely tied up with religion that it has a far deeper meaning than “politics,” so that the latter is really an inadequate translation. So the author concludes that, really, English does not have a term for “*siyasa*.” Democracy, being a political arrangement or concept, “has nothing to do with religion. It does not even know it and does not make use of its laws. Thus it is necessary that we distinguish between Pagans and Muslims, between democracy and *siyasa*. Democracy represents a Pagan way of life. Islam is very different. But to say that *siyasa* has nothing to do with religion amounts to heresy.”

It is easy to distinguish the two views, according to this author. You will find that almost every democratic jurisdiction or authority goes against the spirit of the Qur’an. *Siyasa*, on the other hand, will not succeed without close ties to Islam and to a people whose lives are governed by Muslim institutions. Actually the two ways relate to each other as “*kishiyoyin hanyoyi*,” i.e., they are opposites or competitors. So, when people talk of religion and *siyasa*, do they mean *siyasa* or democracy? In Islam religion and *siyasa* go together. If you are involved in the one you are in the other as well; they cannot be separated.¹¹

▲ MISCELLANEOUS QUOTATIONS

“Secularisation, which is assumed to be the order of the day, is defined as ‘the deliverance of the human being from religious and metaphysical control over his reason and language.’”—Yusuf L. Hadeijia.¹²

“Secularism in my dictionary means: (1) the view that morality shouldn’t be based on religion; (2) something worldly or material, not religious or spiritual”—Ibrahim Aliyu.¹³

Secularism is “*Ba ruwan addini da siyasa.*” “*Arna ne da tsarinsu na kafirci wato ‘sekula’ (da Turanci) aka raba addini da sauran ayyukan dan Adam.*” “*Kiristoci ne suka yi wata tsanya tsakanin al’amuran Duniya da na Lahira. A wajensu ibada daban, sauran hidimomin yau da kullum kuma daban. Tirkashi! Saboda haka ba a maganar addini sai in an je wajen ‘sallah’*”—Anonymous author in *Nasiba*.¹⁴

SECULARISM: ANTITHESIS TO ISLAM

Most Muslims regard secularism as a scourge that needs to be fought off. It is seen as the very antithesis of Islam. Both mainstream and Fundamentalist Islam are totally repelled by the Nigerian Christian call for secular government. “It is a rival [*kishiya*] to Islam. It is a rival to our religion,”¹⁵ declares one *Nasiba* author. Other meanings of “*kishiya*” are “co-wife,” the primary meaning, and “opposite.” This negative attitude should not surprise anyone in view of the fact that Muslims understand secularism as endorsing and even hoping for the demise of religion in general and Islam in particular. Secular France, the home of the French Revolution and of brotherhood, liberty and equality, allegedly favours the “withering away” of “separate communities.” However, Islam has refused to “discard its identity for the secularly imposed world view.”¹⁶

Ibraheem Sulaiman writes in almost apocalyptic style about two antagonistic powers in the world, Islam on the one hand and

the Western together with former Eastern blocks on the other, with their secular world view. This world view is represented by Gog and Magog, two huge statues in front of the Guildhall in London, but also terms reminiscent of Biblical apocalyptic literature. These statues, according to Sulaiman, have stood there since ancient times and “clearly have great bearing and connection” with ancient Britons and their gods. Those forces will one day unleash a “catastrophe of unimaginable proportion.” They will bring “distress and ruin” to Islam. The “distinguishing feature” of the civilization these terrible forces will unleash is that it is “one-eyed, i.e., it knows only the material side of life and has no knowledge or concern for the spiritual.” They represent “the forces of materialism, or a civilization dedicated entirely and exclusively to secularism.” This civilization “shines like a bright star pointing to [its] dazzling material achievements.” Furthermore, it “will have a solid scientific base. It simply is technology personified.” It will “create paradise on earth full of bodily pleasures, fantasies, luxury and unimaginable affluence.” It will also “create hell on earth. It will build a world of deception, of luxury and of suffering.” It will breed “such social diseases as alienation, loneliness, crime, corruption, degradation of man, leading in many instances to mental disorders and suicide and irreversible decline in society.”

Sulaiman chafes under the “severe restraints” secularism “imposes on us in our search for a better way of life that flows from our belief and one that integrates all aspects of life into an organic whole.” Islam should have no truck with it or make concessions to it. Neither should Islam compromise its “fundamental obligations to banish neo-colonialism¹⁷ from our soil.” Instead, it should put the sharia once again on full course. Secularism is the great divide between Islam and Christianity. “In her blind belief in secularism,” he writes, Nigeria “has failed to acknowledge the existence of the fundamental difference between Islam and Christianity in conception of life and methods of dealing with human problems.” In

short, he regards secularism as the great enemy of Islam, a basic dividing point or antithesis between Islam and Christianity. In its dualistic separations—the mundane from the spiritual and religion from state and politics—secularism is an anti-religious force, certainly anti-Muslim. Secular regimes are “instinctively anti-Muslim,” Sulaiman declares.¹⁸

Sulaiman is hardly alone with his declaration of this antithesis. Writer upon writer repeats the theme. R. D. Abubakre identifies what he calls the “contradistinction between a spiritual and mundane life” as a “fundamental difference between Islam and other religions.”¹⁹ El-Miskin suggests that secularism assumes that the “secular” and the “religious” aspects of life exist separately. This assumption, in fact, “is pivotal to the secular alternatives promoted in the Muslim world.” Secularism separates concerns of “other-worldliness” from “the goodness of this life.” This world has nothing to do with the hereafter. He further asserts that “Muslims are instinctively conscious that their religion inherently rejects secularism and consider it a dangerous misrepresentation of the interests of the human community.”²⁰ Secularists regard religion “at best as an individual ritual whose attraction will diminish as the young generation gets educated,” according to Hassan Askari. They consider religion as “a reactionary force, an antithesis to progress.”²¹ Secularism constitutes a threat to Islam. Bashir Tofa, the publisher of *The Pen and Alkalami*, as well as manufacturer of toilet paper and one-time presidential aspirant, asserts that, though secularism works against all religions, Islam is more threatened by it than any other.²²

Ibrahim Avagi considers secularism “a deviation from the Creator’s ‘Fitrah’,” i.e., the law of creation. By his creation or nature, man is a religious being. “There is no society without a religion,” he asserts. Secularism arises when a society

rejects the laws and way of life ordained by the Creator and adopts their own inventions. A secular state is a nation where

*only the material existence of man is important. Secularism rejects the religious or spiritual existence of man in society. The laws of such a society are based on the denial of . . . man as a religious being. Secularism is, therefore, a perverted system.*²³

To deny or to pervert, that amounts to an antithesis, two hostile opposites.

While many Christians locate *the* antithesis with Islam in their respective views on Jesus Christ, many Muslim writers locate it in the dualism that is part of the secular territory. Az-Zubair vehemently rejects secularism. “We reject, totally” its validity, also as it appears among its “clones” within Islam, “clones” referring to “secular” modernist Muslims whom we will hear more about later in this volume. “Islam totally rejects any application to itself of the concepts of secularism, as they do not belong and are alien to it in every respect.”²⁴

Though he often agrees with and even admires Sanusi, a banker-scholar sometimes berated by fellow Muslims as a secular modernist, Abdullahi Bello cannot go along with his plea for compromise and cooperation with non-Muslims. He does not use the terms “secular” or “antithesis” in his paper, but his discussion is all about these two concepts. He asks a series of rhetorical questions. “How can we build a more religious society, when we have many religions that are sometimes diametrically opposed to each other?” How can we develop our economics, politics, culture together, when major concepts are completely different? The issue of usury is a wedge in economics between the religions. The multicultural and multi-religious values of Nigeria are “to a very large extent incompatible with our [Muslim] values.” “How can we be comfortable with a system that places people, not God, as [the] sovereign power?” He concludes, “We cannot afford to compromise our identity and accept the present arrangement which has its roots in imperialism.”²⁵

Not only does secularism trivialize religion by spiritualizing it and separating it from the rest of life, but it ends up turning religion

exactly into what many Nigerian Christians say it should be, namely “a strictly private matter,”²⁶ a concept Muslims revile against wholeheartedly. In short, secularism and Islam are mutually exclusive. Secularism competes with Islam for the minds and hearts of men—and that, in Muslim theology, is nothing less than *shirk*, idolatry or heresy. This part of the discussion is reminiscent of Monograph Two, where we hear Muslim leaders revile westernized Muslims.

Islam, Ado-Kurawa insists, is “fundamentally different” from secularism in that Islam is “rooted in both the spiritual and temporal.” The *major* difference between Islam and Western Christianity is that

Islamic society enjoys a unitive system, whereas the Western society has possessed a duality of systems. Islam advocates unity between physical and spiritual existence, between temporal and secular authorities and between faith and science. Thus the distinguishing aspects of Christianity and Islam is that Christianity is a religion of spiritualism, Islam is the totality of man's life.

Ado-Kurawa explains that during the Middle Ages Muslims and Christians influenced each other, but this was cut off by the budding development of secularism. Because of this development “Islam and Christendom parted ways. They no longer had a common intellectual language with which they could address each other. This was because the West had put reason above revelation.”²⁷ Indeed, a formidable antithesis that has prevented communication, according to Ado-Kurawa.

Secularism is so antithetical to Islam that they cannot coexist in peace. “Secularism cannot succeed in any Muslim society without the use of force,” Ado-Kurawa declared. Turkey with its secular regime, for example, is more authoritarian than democratic, with the military propping up the regime.²⁸ This is the basis also for Ibraheem Sulaiman’s observation that “any attempt to bring about a secular political and social transformation in a Muslim

society is bound to fail. Islam alone is the source of such a transformation.”²⁹ The two will not mix. Where it is attempted, it is always at the expense of Islam.

Muslims understand secularism as an attempt to reduce and eventually to scrap religion. However, Shittu thinks that it is impossible to scrap religion. Secularists—“agnostics” as he sometimes calls them—often think they have “no need for any divine ideology” and that religion is “unrealistic and a sham.” However, “people who reflect would realise that the human senses are not all that reliable.” “Reality,” he observes, “can be achieved through religion.” “We cannot live in a world without religion, because religion forms part of the natural and inherent culture of mankind.” Therefore, Muslims cannot trust a non-religious man. “Religion is a fundamental factor in the life of man and is reflected in so many social factors.” States without religion, such as the former Soviet Union, “who have no spiritual religion,” worship human heroes like Stalin or Lenin in order “to fill the vacuum created in their souls. This practice manifests the inevitability of religion in the life of a human being. It is therefore an established fact that man has need to worship God and seek His divine guidance....”³⁰ From this point of view, the antithesis runs between the need for God and rejecting Him as non-existent.

The antithesis is not merely an intellectual construct, but it also needs practical expression. Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, the leader of the Islamic Movement³¹ who featured prominently in Monograph Two, has intended for years that his movement work “towards the practical and revolutionary transformation of the country along the lines of Islam. This means, the preparation of Muslims for the inevitable clash with Kufr” [non-Muslims]. All of this was inspired by the Iranian revival. Students began to shout the slogan “Islam Only.”³²

It is this secularism, this antithetical force that, according to Tofa, is the reason for the global Muslim revival. It is a reaction “against secularism which, those countries felt, had eroded their basic beliefs and therefore

could no longer be tolerated.” And it is Islam’s rejection of this proud philosophy of superiority, its “resistance to secularity” that is “the prime whipper of Western-Christian’s constant attack on Islam and Muslims.”³³

The antithesis is real, but, absolute as it sounds, it does not necessarily preclude co-operation with or even learning from non-Muslims. Yusuf Hadeijia describes the Muslim point of view vigorously, but he also states, “This is not to suggest, however, that the secularists and the Muslims cannot peacefully coexist. Peaceful coexistence is a must.”³⁴ Similarly, Shittu occasionally expressed himself antithetically, but he is also open to the positive contributions and characteristics of non-Muslim societies. In Nigeria, it is a rare Muslim who speaks positively about ATR societies, but Shittu speaks highly about them as well as the efforts of Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Tom Mboya of Kenya.³⁵ This may be a case of socialist ideology overriding Muslim impulses.

This kind of accommodating spirit is a hopeful sign. In our final monograph we may hear more about that. In the meantime, with all these antithetical attitudes in the air, it may surprise you that there are signs of co-operation already now. Under the heading “Separation of Religion from Politics” below, we will read about Muslim and Christian politicians working together. It is actually a well established tradition in Nigerian politics. It is also found in other sectors. A few years ago, Governor Abubakar Habu Hashidu of Gombe State, during the very height of the sharia controversy, invited a conglomeration of Christian medical organizations from the United States of all places, to “build a permanent hospital in the state.” He was “moved” with the “generous and humanitarian services” the Christian Medical Fellowship in conjunction with Pro-Health International and Eye Cure Africa had already rendered in his state and promised his full cooperation by providing “free land, access roads, potable water, electricity and that the settlement would be named after the pioneer medical director to be so appointed by Pro-Health International.”³⁶ In 2004, we find Hajiya

Fatima Hamza opening a Muslim girls secondary school “that will combine Western and Islamic education,” something that in itself is not new at all. The school was founded as a corrective, because almost all Kaduna schools use *only* a Western curriculum. Nevertheless, it would be open to Christians as well, with the promise that no attempt at conversion would be made. Hamza explained that she was the product of a Christian school where no one pressured her to become Christian.³⁷ This is the kind of cooperative spirit one would hardly expect from the antithetical attitude and it gives us reason for hope. Antithesis, yes, but with hopeful signs of positive co-operation.

While Muslims claim to understand secularism, they are quite convinced that secularists do not understand Islam. There is a serious and inherent flaw in the secular perspective. Muhammad Tawafiq Ladan has described this flaw so vigorously and so well that I include his article as Appendix 12.³⁸ There is no way I can express it better than he did. His statements square fully with my oft-stated opinion that secularism is blindfolded when it comes to religion and suffers from serious tunnel vision. Though he does not make a big point of it, Ibraheem Sulaiman shrugs off his Christian compatriots, the “secular element,” who “blindly and arrogantly” insist that “everybody must live according to their own way.”³⁹ It sounds all too familiar and seems to reflect universal experience with secularism.

One question that arises is whether one can generalize the antithesis. Is there only an antithesis between Islam and secularism, along with the other members of the “unholy triad,” or does it extend to the entire non-Muslim world? Sometimes it seems like the latter. The reason for the confusion here is that Nigerian discussions are restricted to the context of Western Christianity and largely ignore other world religions. Sheikh Ibrahim Saleh, for example, said that Muslims do not seek guidance from any other law or people. They do not follow the opinion of either East or

West, Russia or America. These are all different people who have their own cultures that are different from Islam.⁴⁰ That sounds like an absolute antithesis.

However, in the same interview, the same sheikh affirms that it is quite legitimate for a Muslim to receive education at the hands of non-Muslims. He illustrates this historically by showing how the Prophet Muhammad freely used clothes made by non-Muslims. Early Muslims utilized the products and inventions of other cultures liberally. The same holds for science and technology. Muslims should embrace them freely.⁴¹ Of course, Muslims passed on the legacy of the Greeks to the West. This attitude of qualified openness to other cultures, even that of the much-vilified West, marks even Fundamentalists. This can be seen especially in their eager embrace of Western scientific education that shines through in most of these monographs.

▲ SELECTED QUOTATIONS

“Fundamental disagreements remain among Muslims over divine versus popular sovereignty. Some have argued that if democracy is conceived as a limited form of popular sovereignty, restricted and directed by God’s law, this is not incompatible with Islam, while [others] argued that Islam is the very antithesis of secular Western democracy based solely on the sovereignty of the people.”

“For many Muslims, however, the secular state is viewed as an instrument used to undermine religious heritage and deny the relevance of moral teachings to public life. While this perception has an element of truth, it does not necessarily depict the general nature of Western secularism. Evidently, Muslim perceptions of secularism are not formed through an understanding of the original purpose and historical circum-

stances of Western secularism, but is influenced by the Muslim experience of secular dogmatism and the intolerance of the secular state in contemporary Muslim societies, most notably those of Turkey and many Arab and Central Asian states”—Hussaini Abdu.⁴²

▲ REJECTION OF SECULAR GOVERNMENTS —————

It is the firm opinion of Muslims that the Nigerian federal government as well as most state governments are grossly partial to Christians.⁴³ This is due to colonial policies and their continuing aftermath even into the new century. The country's elite and their representatives in the government are little more than the gate men for Western interests in all sectors, whether political, economic or religious. In fact, the Muslim Student Society (MSS) lamented, “The government has been rendered toothless and helpless by the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in its drive to tear the country apart through its persistent campaign of hatred and calumny against Islam and Muslims.”⁴⁴ This alleged government partiality is one reason Muslims have little appreciation for authority.⁴⁵

But there is also the opposite reason. In the above paragraph, government is too much involved in *another* religion. There is equal rejection of government that wants to keep out of religious affairs. Mahmoud Turi, the right hand aide to El-Zakzaki, explained that the only reason his organization, the Muslim Movement, does not get along with the government is that it “shows it wants nothing to do with religion. If there is anything Islam rejects vehemently it is the separation of government from religion.” Readers of Monograph Two will remember the struggles this organization has with the government and the numerous arrests and frequent imprisonment its members experience. There is indeed no love or respect lost. “Talk of separation of politics and religion is mere deceit.”⁴⁶

Turi's master, El-Zakzaky, fired up by the Iranian overthrow of their secular government, sought to undermine government authority. He "dismissed the nation state, the flag and national anthem as manifestations of *taghut*," a human contravention of divine law. Monograph Two describes his organization's defiance of government that led to demonstrations and frequent imprisonment of El-Zakzaky and his followers. Though he rejects the frequent charge that he is Shi'ite, his ideology definitely is shaped by it. His ideology includes rejection of constituted authority that has no clear Muslim base, even if those in authority are Muslims. As Muhammed Sulaiman summarizes it, "The Movement has over the decade, remained considerably opposed to the secular state. They regard it as one that lacks political legitimacy, since it is not built on the foundation of the sharia."

Another of El-Zakzaky's disciples, Yakubu Yahaya, also discussed in Monograph Two, was sacked from the staff of the Arabic Teachers College, because he taught disobedience to and disrespect for authority. In keeping with the stance of the Muslim Movement, he, too, promoted disregard for the national anthem and the flag, because they "erode the faith of Muslims in Islam." He also encouraged students to ignore the school's routine whenever it conflicted with Muslim prayer time. He even disregarded religious authorities that issue preaching licenses by preaching without a license. Monograph Two gives an account of demonstrations he organized and that often goaded the police into violence. Many were arrested.⁴⁷

Yahaya was very strong in his rejection of the Babangida government, even though the latter is a staunch Muslim. For one thing, the government rejected Yahaya and his movement by imprisoning him without just cause. In fact, the government, the judge and "everybody that had a hand in this oppression, they regret it" and "have apologized to me," he reported. They admitted that they had found no weapons on him and his followers. It is the police who are

the troublemakers, not his followers.⁴⁸ The authorities sought to “obstruct the course of this calling.” He was becoming too popular with the people, “so that the government is afraid.” Even when he was released, the government prevented his followers from immediately receiving him with the enthusiasm they would have shown. The government, as per Yahaya’s own story, did not know how to deal with a criminal who was to be given a hero’s welcome.

Yahaya’s rejection of the government was a deep-seated one. Yahaya regarded the government of Babangida as a “government of satan. Government sees that the people’s loyalty is with Islam, not with oppressors.” Even if other Muslims were to move into power, as long as the system remains, it will be a satanic government. “Anybody who comes to rule with this system is of Satan.” “Satan is anyone that is not of Allah.”⁴⁹ We are back in the atmosphere of the antithesis.

▲ SECULAR POLITICS

Given the previous sections of this chapter, you will not expect any Muslim kudos for secular politics. Abdulsalam Ajetunmobi summarized “three basic principles” of secular politics that “are common to every practitioner around the world” since “ancient times.” The reference to “ancient times” seems out of place, since Muslims generally place the beginning of secularism in a later period as seen earlier. These are the principles the West adheres to, also in its Israeli policy. I will state the principles as he sees them, followed by their Muslim counterpart:

1. Secular: *“Whenever the tribal, racial or national interests of a nation clash with the principles of justice, then priority and precedence must only be given to tribal, group or national interest, even if the principle of justice has to be totally torn to shreds.”*

Islam: *The Muslim counterpart, found in the Qur’an 5:18 is “totally different.” “O you who believe, be upright for Allah,*

bearers of witness with justice; and let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably. Be just; that is nearer to observance of duty...to Allah."

2. Secular: *"If you possess power and strength, then you must attain your objective through this sheer superiority of strength, since, for them, might is right. As if apart from this belief there is no other principle of fidelity existent in the world."*

Islam: *Again, it is "completely different." The Qur'an 8:42 states "Only he deserves to perish, against whom you are equipped with the criterion of truthfulness, which should also stand open as your testimony. And only he should survive, whose survival is supported by truth." In short, this is the contrast between "might is right" and "right is might."*

3. Secular: *"In order to achieve your objective, you should, without hesitation, indulge in false propaganda. This is not only permitted, but the greater the deception or falsehood, the better it serves the interest of their objective."*

Islam: *The Qur'an 22:30 states, "...so shun the filth of the idols and shun false words." 6:153—"When you speak, be just, though it be [against] a relative...."*

Ajetunmobi comments, "From the above it is crystal clear that there is a distinct difference between the Western democracy vis-à-vis its politics and Islamic statecraft." This "code of conduct" will succeed; it is "invincible." Hence, "no power on earth can eclipse the code of conduct.... So let every Muslim in his/her struggle against occupation, injustice and whatever evil on the face of the earth, revert to that code of justice, which I briefly set out above and then adopt their precept. It is certain that the evildoers will never prosper!"⁵⁰

As different as Islam and secularism may seem to Ajetunmobi, Hussaini Abdu has quite a different spin:

Reacting to secular dogmatism, populist Islamic groups have advanced a conception of the state that, while different in substance, is quite similar in purpose and form to the very secular state they oppose. Like Muslim secularists, Islamic populists see the state as an instrument in the hands of ruling powers for imposing particular conceptions of the world and specific values on the rest of society. They insist, therefore, that the Islamic state should be charged with the duty of imposing Islamic law on the larger society. It is, however, observed that the position of contemporary populist movements stands in direct contradiction not only to Islamic values and beliefs, but is also contrary to political practices developed in historical Muslim societies.⁵¹

I have long been conscious of that similarity between the two world views, in spite of their antagonistic rhetoric against each other. I would go a step further by insisting that some secular models of oppressing competitive world views and conceptions are very similar to the traditional Muslim model. Both insist on the right to determine and restrict the scope of other communities. The Canadian model shares some of its features. Abdu's view is, of course, almost an affront to the Islamist community: What? A *Muslim* equating us with *infidels*!?

▲ SEPARATION OF RELIGION FROM POLITICS ———

Despite the insistence on the unity of Islam with politics and state, you do also hear calls for separating religion from politics. Like Christians, Muslims are not always unanimous or consistent. Though the tone of the previous sections is representative of Nigerian Islam, when it is politically expedient, Muslim politicians, again like their Christian counterparts as I show in Monograph Five, can also push the privacy button. Massoud Oredola of the

Ilorin Sharia Court of Appeal, begins an article with reference to “two irreconcilables—religion and politics.” In keeping with this notion, he also writes, “Religion, though private, personal and individual, serves as an avenue for collective identification.”⁵² These are words one would not normally expect from a sharia specialist, but there they are.

The campaign for the 2003 elections was particularly characterized by calls for separation and for recognizing the potential danger of religion. The All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) has for some years been burdened by an alleged statement by former Military Head of State, Muhammad Buhari, ANPP presidential candidate in 2003, that Muslims should vote only for a Muslim president. The controversy as to whether he really said that raged on throughout the campaign and has never been settled. Here is the relevant section of his speech translated from Hausa by Musa Umar Kazaure:

Make sure you do not listen to a person who will use his position or money to influence you to vote those who will not support your stand on your religion.

So ensure that you vote only those who will fight your cause. A Sokoto man must not be president. A Borno man must not be president. A Kano man must not be president. If the Muslims are united here and in the South-West states where Muslims are in the majority, I am sure we can get a Muslim or good Muslims that will rule this country. That is the best thing for us. You must vote somebody who will protect your religion and dignity. If you allow exploiters of religion and your dignity to install a president and continue ruling this country, then know that they will turn us into their labourers and there is nothing we can do about it. This is the greatest challenge before us and I urge you to enlighten all Muslims on this wherever they are in Nigeria.⁵³

In 2003 this statement was still called “the albatross of sharia and religion which still hangs on the head of General Buhari” and the entire party. It still needed frequent explaining (away?).⁵⁴ The problem was one of political manipulation of religion, a sacrilegious use of religion and abuse of religion, all of which go against the grain of religion itself.

ANPP spokesmen throughout the campaign sought to overcome that “albatross” by separating religion from politics. Yahya Abubakar, competing for the presidential nomination of his religiously-mixed party, rejected the suggestion by a journalist that his party was a Muslim party. Recognizing that it would hurt his party—and his chances—for it to be labeled Muslim, he responded “I don’t think we should begin to focus on what is not. Religion, as far as some of us are concerned, is a private affair. It’s something between you and your God; and not something to be used divisively.”⁵⁵

Yerima Sani, the Zamfara governor who inaugurated the new sharia era, is a member of the ANPP. Even he called for such separation only one day after Abubakar’s statement. Journalist Ali M. Ali reported that the governor “has refuted allegations that he mixes politics with religion.” Sani had explained “that at no time did he mix politics with religion, that his political party, the ANPP, draws its membership from across the two major religions in the country.”⁵⁶ These are surely unexpected statements from this sharia warrior, but it is not the only time he has surprised us. At a time when practically all Muslim leaders insist that Nigeria is multi-religious, not secular, he is quoted as affirming that Nigeria is a secular state!⁵⁷ The lingering effect of the Buhari controversy on the ANPP was damaging and is a major reason this call for separation became a party line. Christian members of the same party made the same disclaimer, as we will see in the next monograph.

Shehu Shagari, a native of Sokoto state and a former civilian President, “deplored canvassing of religious issues by politicians.” It was not practised during his time, he declared, thus criticising his

fellow Sokotonian, Alhaji Bafarawa, who ran as a gubernatorial candidate in Sokoto State. The candidate was said to be “street smart and politically astute” and accused of bringing religion into the picture. However, Bafarawa denied the charge and “blamed the media for casting his party in a religious light.” Nevertheless, he allegedly “urged the people to vote for *maisalla*,” a Muslim.⁵⁸

As un-Islamic as these calls for separation sound, it was not new to the recent election campaigns. You will see later in this monograph that already during the 1970s, a Muslim stalwart like Lateef Adegbite, later to become Secretary to the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, objected to a move to return confiscated mission schools to their original owners. He objected precisely because he viewed this as a “manifestation of religious politics,” something he could not approve. In fact, during the presidential campaign of 2002-2003 this separation was a common theme among politicians of both faiths and of all parties, including, as we will see in Monograph Five, President Obasanjo.⁵⁹ It is also there that you will find a more basic explanation for this tendency.

There was still another reason for separation. Alhaji Mohammed Bate, the Bauchi State Commissioner of Police, “warned religious leaders to make a distinction between politics and religion, and to desist from using the platform of religion to instigate crises in the state.”⁶⁰ The motive for this Muslim’s call for separation is clear.

That this general concern among Muslims had a basis in fact becomes clear from Mallam Shehu Sani, President of the Kaduna-based Civil Rights Congress, who complained that “religious sentiments have dominated political campaigns,” a development that “portended grave dangers for the nation’s democracy.”

He further explained,

It is unfortunate that wherever we go, we have been faced with the stark reality—people are not interested in your elec-

toral promises, they are not interested in your capability to bring about the necessary change. The first question they ask you is, “What is your religion?” One of the greatest problems in the campaign and politics in Kaduna State is the high level of religious sentiments of the people.

You may be curious as to how this heightened interest in religion came about. Shehu Sani’s explanation is that “most of the governors in northern Nigeria are exploiting religious sentiments to whip their people into line. They use religion to misinform the people, they use religion to neutralise resistance, they use religion to justify injustice and they use religion to bring about division among the people.” Sani decided to stand for election in order “to rescue the sliding democratic process.”⁶¹

▲ THE HIJAB CONTROVERSY IN THE WEST —————

Nigerian Muslims are aware of developments abroad. They are familiar with the battle over the *hijab* or head scarf that has developed in some Western countries, but especially in France. Ajetunmobi’s comments on this situation portray a deep awareness of the true nature of secularism. His analysis of this faith is very similar to that developed in the Kuyperian Reformed or Neo-Calvinist tradition that is explained in Volume Five. His comments are too short to rate an appendix, but I can hardly improve on his challenge to the French. Hence I describe his view extensively in the next few paragraphs.

Ajetunmobi indicates that French secularism stripped itself bare naked in public in its hysterical objections to the *hijab*. “French secularism clearly permits thong underwear, stiletto heels, tattooed breasts and buttocks, but regards religious iconographies as objectionable symbols of social disharmony and disunity. What becomes of the principle of mutual exchange of advantages or privileges

between people in a supposedly liberal secular state?" he asked. Can someone please "explain how the use of head scarf and any other religious symbol will impinge upon the rights of wearers of stiletto heels, etc., mentioned above? The right to differ is one of the greatest of social virtues." "By respecting the free will of others to choose how they want to live their lives, we best protect our own."

Secularism, Ajetunmobi goes on, may be a "negation of God," but it actually is also a religion. He summarizes the six characteristics of religion as outlined in the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* and concludes that on that basis secularism is a religion. President Chirac has said that the *hijab* "cannot be tolerated" or allowed to challenge "the principles of the republic." This means that "the secular laws and principles are sacred to him." And so, Ajetunmobi continues, "secularism becomes the religion of a secular state." And then comes the clincher: "If President Chirac's belief in secularism would be meaningless unless he abides by its principles, so also will Muslim beliefs be meaningless if the head scarf they regard as a divine obligation is banned." In addition, the French policy of keeping public institutions "only secular to the detriment of non-secular principles violates the United Nations' (UN) cherished freedom of religion and right to education as protected by many international documents." He then proceeds to quote from a number of internationally adopted freedom and rights documents to drive his point home forcefully. Everyone has "the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion," including freedom of religious choice, both individually and in community, privately and publicly and "to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching."

This freedom also extends to education. Remember: the French issue is about dress at public schools. Parents have the right to determine the direction of the education of their children. Children have the right to an education for "responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and

friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.” A child is “not to be denied the right...to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.”

Ajetunmobi’s last paragraph goes as follows:

That there are extremists at one end of the spectrum in many faiths and many movements is a fact of life. Much as terrorists have acted in the name of Islam, fundamentalist Christians have also been linked to bombings at abortion clinics and murders of abortion doctors too. They have all done these deeds in the name of their respective religions. In the case of Christians, however, no one has yet suggested that nuns be forced to wear conventional western garb or that teachers be prohibited from wearing a crucifix because of the excesses of a segment of the Christian faith. Therefore, to tar all practitioners of a faith with the same brush would be definitive bigotry. [Non-Muslims] should appreciate that secular systems are devised to bring about the public disappearance of other religions. For, while no sincere adherent of other regular religions would seek to dictate or impose their precepts on non-believers, secularists are keen to tell people of all faiths what they should believe and how they should express it. Is secularism not worse than other religions?

That pretty well sums up the majority Muslim opinion on secularism. Indeed France has done Muslims—and the rest of us—a real favour in exposing the Achilles’ heel of secularism and by stripping it bare for all to see. The French fearful restriction on the head scarf is a far cry from the “liberty, equality and fraternity” it unleashed on the world at the end of the 18th century—or is it? Could it be that the original implicit definitions of these key terms were too narrow to accommodate the multi-religio-cultural situation of today? Islam is often accused of intolerance by the West, but

what are we to say of the French—and the Germans and Danish—
all of whom have legislated against the *hijab*?⁶²

▲ NOTES

¹ K. Balogun, 1986, pp. 59-61.

² *Shariah in Nigeria*, pp. 3, 5-7. *Sharia in the Press*, pp. 13, 134-135, 400.

³ I. Sulaiman's name, both first and last, has variant spellings. I will stick to this one. He holds prestigious positions. He is/was Director of the Centre for Islamic and Legal Studies as well as a member of the Council of Ulama (I. Umar, 2 Nov/99).

⁴ I. Sulaiman, 5 Dec/93; Mar/86, p. 3.

⁵ M. Sulaiman, 1988, pp. 81, 83-84.

⁶ See entry "*Nasiba*" in the bibliography.

⁷ Original Hausa: "*sekkulanci, (wato tafarkin raba addini da siyasa).*" In my Hausa-language publications I use my very own neologism for "secularism": "*biyuntaka*," meaning "two-ness" ("*biyu*" means "two") or "dualism," the term used in Neo-Calvinist philosophy to refer to the major characteristic of secularism, namely, to divide life into the two realms of the "sacred" and the "worldly." The term was modeled after the Hausa term for "unity," "*dayantaka*" ("*daya*" means "one") and utilizes the recognized device of attaching the suffix "n-taka" to create abstract nouns. The advantage of my term is that it has a natural base in the language.

⁸ *Nasiba*, p. 33. Original Hausa: "*Sekkulanci a takaice shi ne: (1) A ba shugaban coci damar ya fice daga cocin, ya bar addini ya sakata ya wala; (2) Ko a yi wa majami'a (coci) kwace musamman ma dai gwamnati, kamar a karbe makarantunsu ko asibitoci; (3) Ko rayuwar jama'a ta kasance ba addini ne ke tafiyar da ita ba, wato ba ruwansu da addini.*"

⁹ A. Yadudu, 7 Apr/89.

¹⁰ H. Hassan, 15 Feb/91.

¹¹ *Nasiba*, p. 27. For another Muslim discussion on democracy, see Shittu, p. 40.

¹² *NN*, 8 Dec/99.

¹³ *NN*, 13 Dec/99.

¹⁴ *Nasiba*, pp. 26-27. English translation: "Religion and politics have nothing to do with each other." "Non-Muslims and their laws have paganized in that they separate religion from the rest of human affairs."

“Christians have placed a blockage between the affairs of the world and those of the next. For them, religion is one thing, while the daily human concerns are something different. Fancy that! Thus you do not talk of religion unless you are going to prayers.”

¹⁵ *Nasiha*, p. 38. Original Hausa: “*Sekkulanci Kishiyar Musulunci ne. Kishiyar Addininmu ne.*”

¹⁶ Ado-Kurawa, *Sharia and the Press*, p. 143; *Sharia in Nigeria*, p. 18. The *hijab* controversy in France in 2003 is a clear indication of how strongly France wants to maintain its secular traditions. It is doing so on basis of flimsy excuses and clearly exposes the fragile foundation of its secular faith/world view.

¹⁷ Neo-colonialism, like its predecessor, colonialism, and its successor, globalism, are all identified as tools of secularism as will be seen in detail below.

¹⁸ *SNN*, 5 Dec/93, pp. 4, 13-14; *SNN*, 14 Aug/199...[exact date illegible], p. 3. *Political Future*, p. 2. Rashid, p. 53. It is interesting to compare this expectation to a similar one by the Christian activist, A. Kuyper, in Bratt, pp. 181-182.

¹⁹ R. Abubakre, “Islamic Nostrum,” p. 4.

²⁰ T.El-Miskin, p. 7. Appendix 2.

²¹ H. Askari, 1979, pp. 103, 165.

²² B.Tofa, 10 Mar/89.

²³ I. Avagi, 22 Dec/95. Appendix 4.

²⁴ Appendix 1.

²⁵ A. Bello, “The Islamic Movement,” p. 1. The challenge for Muslims is, of course, the same as for all other religions, namely to learn to become at least somewhat comfortable in a multi-religious situation, at least tolerate it and live with it without necessarily liking it or agreeing with it. It has become as inescapable a reality as sunshine and rain. For Bello to expect Islam to maintain or create a situation where it is wholly comfortable is unrealistic in this situation. Islam will have to prove its mettle *in* this new reality, not *against* it.

²⁶ M. Sulaiman, p. 83.

²⁷ Ado-Kurawa, *Shariah*, pp. 10, 12. The first of the above two quotations is only partially original with Ado-Kurawa, because he, in turn, quoted from D. Yahya.

²⁸ I. Ado-Kurawa, *Shariah in Nigeria*, p. 14.

²⁹ I. Sulaiman, 1983, pp. 19-22.

³⁰ R. Shittu, pp. 48-49.

³¹ One interesting characteristic of the Islamic Movement is that at one time an estimated 80 per cent of the members had not gone beyond primary school [M. D. Sulaiman, p. 12]. To the contrary, Western reports on the global wing of extreme Fundamentalists that end up in terrorism have it that its members tend to be highly educated and technically inclined (D. Pipes, Dec/95, pp. 3-6).

³² M. D. Sulaiman, 1992, pp. 5-6.

³³ B. Tofa, 10 Mar/89.

³⁴ Y. Hadejia, *NN*, 8 Dec/99.

³⁵ R. Shittu, pp. 27-31.

³⁶ *AM*, 16 Feb/2000.

³⁷ S. Babadoko, *DT*, 29 Apr/2004.

³⁸ M. T. Ladan, 27 Jan/89. Appendix 12.

³⁹ I. Sulaiman, 2 Nov/99.

⁴⁰ *Nasiha*, p. 24. Original Hausa: "...ba a neman komi daga wata doka ko wata al'umma. Musulmi ba ruwansa da bin ra'ayin mutanen Gabas ko na Yamma; ba ruwansa da bin hanyar rayuwar mutanen Rasha ko Amerika. Wadannan duk wasu al'ummomi ne masu tsari da hanyar rayuwa daban da ta Musulmi."

⁴¹ *Nasiha*, pp. 22-23. Original Hausa: "Samun ilimi a hannun wadanda ba Musulmi ba, ba wani abu ba ne, in mun koma ga tarihim Musulunci. A zamanin Annabi (S.A.W.) yawancin tufafin da ake amfani da su na kasar Yamen da Rarisa da Sham ne. Amma Annabi bai ce kada a yi amfani da su ba. Watau dai tunanin wasu ne muka dauka muka yi amfani da shi." "To, ni (ma) ina ganin bai kamata Musulmi su yi kyamar fannonin kimiya da kuma kowane irin fanni na fasaha ba."

⁴² H. Abdu, 7 Mar/2003. Appendix 23 in *Companion CD-ROM*.

⁴³ This has been adequately dealt with in Monograph Two. Of course, Christians constantly fault the government for being pro-Islam, as shown in Monograph 3.

⁴⁴ I. I. Bello, 2 Dec/88.

⁴⁵ This issue has received major coverage in Monograph 2.

⁴⁶ M. Turi, "Gwamnati na nuna cewa ita babu ruwanta da addini, wannan masayi ma kawai na iya kawo rashin jituwa. Musulunci kishiyar akidar nan ne na ba ruwan gwamnati da addini." "Trin magana nan ta cewa wai babu ruwan siyasa da addini duk shirme ne, yaudara ce." 15 Jul/88.

⁴⁷ M. D. Sulaiman, 1992, throughout.

⁴⁸ See vol. 1, pp. 79-81 and vol. 2, pp. 146-153 about the violence that surrounded Yahaya's demonstrations. He consistently argues that his people are peaceful and that the police cause the violence for which he is blamed.

⁴⁹ U. Nnanna, 27 Sep/92, pp. 17-18.

⁵⁰ A. Ajetunmobi, "The Middle East Crisis," pp. 2-3.

⁵¹ H. Abdu, 7 Mar/2003. Appendix 23 on *Companion CD-ROM*.

⁵² M. Oredola, 25 Dec/99.

⁵³ M. Buhari, *WT*, 29 June/2001, p. 3. Pages 1-3 of this issue are devoted to the question whether or not Buhari really did utter the controversial statement attributed to him. Remember that you have only a translation before you. See the bibliography for entries under *Weekly Trust*, Isyaku Dikko and Ahmed Oyerinde.

⁵⁴ J. Ajani, 21 Jan/2003. Al-Bashir, 27 Feb/2003. I. Dan Halilu, "Buhari's Candidature," 8 Mar/2003.

⁵⁵ J. Ajani, 21 Jan/2003.

⁵⁶ A. Ali, 22 Jan/2003.

⁵⁷ B. Bitrus, 9 Nov/99, p. 1.

⁵⁸ P. Odili, 28 Apr/2003.

⁵⁹ V. Ahiuma-Young, 20 Jan/2003.

⁶⁰ S. Awofadeji, 16 Apr/2003.

⁶¹ A. Madugba, 5 Mar/2003. Appendix 22 on *Companion CD*.

⁶² The newspaper clips in my file on the *hijab* are more than I care to list and so are the articles published by the BBC. The newspaper clippings are mostly the *Vancouver Sun*, *NRC Handelsblad* and *Trouw*. Check out www.awwalbauchi.faiithweb.com/sharhi/hijab-faransa.html for an article in Hausa.

