

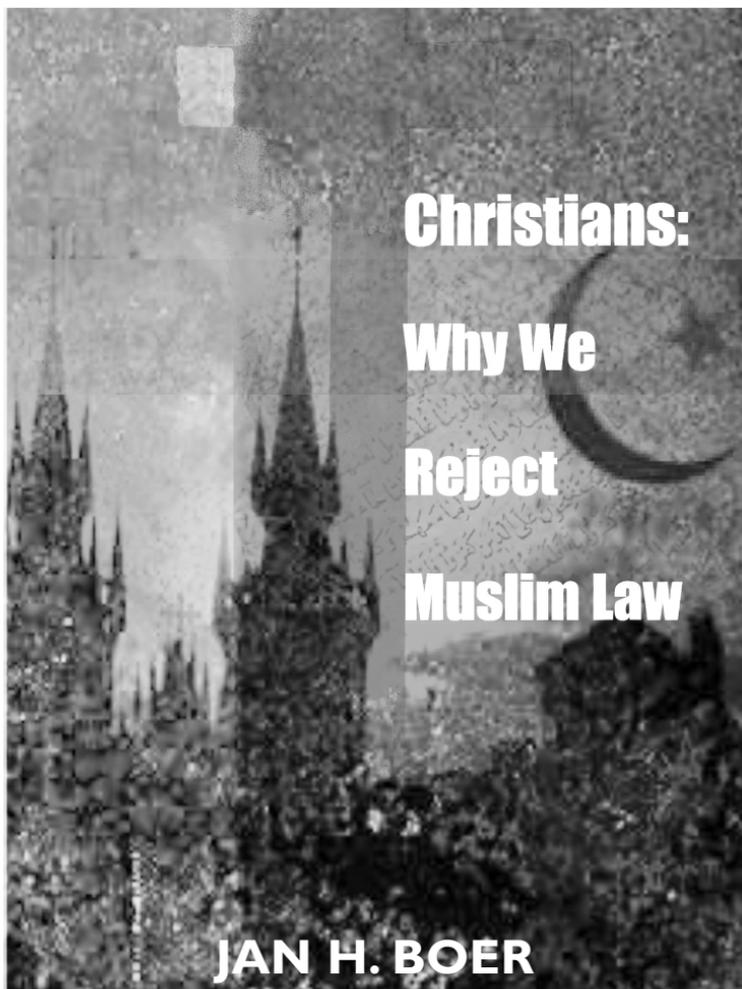
**CHRISTIANS: WHY WE REJECT  
MUSLIM LAW**

*Studies in  
Christian–Muslim Relations*

**VOLUME 7**



STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS - VOL. 7



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***Christians: Why We Reject Muslim Law***  
***Studies in Christian–Muslim Relations Volume 7***

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**For more information please contact the author at:**

E-mail [boerjf@hotmail.com](mailto:boerjf@hotmail.com)

Web site: [www.SocialTheology.com](http://www.SocialTheology.com)

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*There are only three alternatives for dealing with the non-Muslims under the Islamic legal system: (1) They must be converted; (2) They must be subjugated; (3) They must be eliminated.*

Danjuma Byang, *Sharia in Nigeria: A Christian Perspective*, 1988.

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*Remember that our sons controlled the Nigerian Army and the Armed Forces, but what became of their advantaged position? They were ignorant. I have had extensive discussions with some of our retired Generals. Some of them have confessed complete ignorance of socio-political-religious and economic issues. I remember sharing in a certain conference. One retired general could not sleep because of the guilt that haunted him all night. The next morning, he had to call me to tell me of his negligence and ignorance. Our problem has been that our educated and privileged people have ignored the historical roots and destiny of their peoples. They lack affinity, loyalty and obligation to the survival of their own people and their geographical areas.*

*- Yusufu Turaki at Christian Elders' Forum Conference,  
Abuja, 2003*



## Dedication

I dedicate this volume to the following

*~ Warriors for Freedom ~*

Matthew Kukah

*For his spunky exposure of the issues  
and his juicy stories,  
though I sometimes disagree with him*

Yohanna Madaki,

*Posthumously—my long-time hero  
for having sacrificed his military career  
in opposing the forces of feudalism  
over a people not his own*

John Onaiyekan

*For his wisdom and moderation  
in the struggle for reconciliation and unity*

Yusufu Turaki

*For his defence of a people in the grip of Islamic  
apartheid and internal colonialism*

Danjuma Byang, Bee Debki, Justin La-Nibetle  
*For their awareness-building writings on sharia*

*Most especially*

The Church of Christ in Nigeria

COCIN's sons and daughters

*For their unrelenting role as buffer zone  
and their struggle to overcome  
the burdensome heritage of a dualistic gospel*





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# ABBREVIATIONS

ABU	Ahmadu Bello University
ACMO	Association of Christian Motorcycle Operators
AG	Attorney General
AZ	After Zamfara
BZ	Before Zamfara
CA (-s)	Constitutional Assembly (-ies)
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
CCN	Christian Council of Nigeria
CNO	Christians of Northern origin
COCIN	Church of Christ in Nigeria
CRK	Christian Religious Knowledge
CUS	Council for Unity and Solidarity
<i>DI</i>	<i>Daily Independent</i>
<i>D/Triumph</i>	<i>Daily Triumph</i>
<i>DT</i>	<i>Daily Trust</i>
ECWA	Evangelical Churches of West Africa
FSCA	Federal Sharia Court of Appeal

<i>GTFK</i>	<i>Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo</i>
IBS	International Bible Society
ICS	Institute of Church and Society
IDB	Islamic Development Bank
<i>IGPB</i>	<i>InterGender Peace Bulletin</i>
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRK	Islamic Religious Knowledge
JNI	<i>Jama'atul Nasril Islam</i>
<i>LB</i>	<i>The Light Bearer</i>
LCCN	Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria
LG(A)	Local Government (Area)
LGC	Local Government Council
NBA	Nigerian Bar Association
<i>NC</i>	<i>National Concord</i>
NEPU	Northern Elements Progressive Union
NIREC	Nigeria Inter-Religious Council
NKST	Church of Christ Among the Tiv
<i>NN</i>	<i>New Nigerian</i>
NPC	Northern Peoples Congress
NPRC	National Political Reform Conference
<i>NS</i>	<i>Nigeria Standard</i>
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Conference
OPEC	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
RLPL	Religious Liberty Prayer List
<i>SS</i>	<i>Sunday Standard</i>
<i>TC</i>	<i>Today's Challenge</i>
<i>TD</i>	<i>ThisDay</i>
<i>TEKAN</i>	<i>Tarayyar Ikklisiyoyin Kristi a Nijeriya</i>
	Fellowship of the Churches of Christ in Nigeria
UN	United Nations
WIC	The World Igbo Council

# FOREIGN WORDS

These words are either Arabic or Hausa terms adapted from Arabic. Their meaning in Hausa may also have shifted somewhat from the original Arabic.

<i>Alkali(ai)</i>	Judge(s)
<i>Burqah</i>	Dress covering a woman totally
<i>Dar-el-Harb</i>	The House of War
<i>Dar-el-Islam</i>	The House of Islam or Peace
<i>Da'wa</i>	The duty and task of propagating Islam
<i>Dhimmi</i>	Non-Muslims in a Muslim society ascribed secondary status according to a covenant made with Muslim authorities, usually under duress
<i>Hadith</i>	Traditions about the Prophet
<i>Hajj</i>	Pilgrimage
<i>Hijab</i>	Headscarf
<i>Hishbah</i>	Government-appointed religious police (Kano)
<i>Hudud</i>	Sharia punishments like amputation and stoning

<i>Ijtihad</i>	A technical reasoning process to determine the meaning of ancient documents for today
<i>Jahiliyya</i>	Time of ignorance preceding Islamisation
<i>Jihad</i>	Holy war in spiritual, cultural and military sense to propagate Islam
<i>Jizyah</i>	Special tax paid by dhimmi
<i>Khadi</i>	Judge of Sharia Court
<i>Maguzawa</i>	Animist indigenes from the core North who never became Muslim
<i>Purdah</i>	Place of seclusion for women
<i>Ramadan</i>	Annual month of fasting
<i>Sabon Gari</i>	Strangers' Quarters or suburb
<i>Sunnah</i>	An authoritative collection of the teachings and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad
<i>Talakawa</i>	The poor, the masses, the ordinary people
<i>Ulama</i>	Professional Muslim theologians often with great influence on governments of Muslim states
<i>Umma(h)</i>	The Muslim people or community
<i>Ushira</i>	Tithe
<i>'Yan Agaji</i>	Government-appointed religious police (Zamfara)



# PREFACE

You are about to enter the murky world of Nigeria's sharia. If you have read the previous volume, you may wonder why you should enter it again. After all, you have just been there, done that. Yes, but the world of sharia is not the same for everyone. Now we are going to explore the reactions to sharia among Nigerian *Christians*. So, yes, okay, the same murky world, but yet totally different. You've just crossed a steep mountain range within sharia country, where you will find what feels like a very different sharia. So, welcome to this new environment, if not another country.

This book is not another introduction to sharia. For that you have to turn to Volume 6, where you get a quickie. There you will find some historical materials as well as definitions and descriptions presented mostly by Muslims themselves, by sharia adherents. You will have discovered there that the history of sharia in Nigeria has various phases. Reading this Volume 7 will be greatly enhanced if you have read those materials. You will come across the same two historical phases. The history we get in this volume is mostly a history of protest against sharia. That history also has its phases. As in

Volume 6, so in this one the material is often presented in terms of those two major periods: the “pre-Zamfara” phase that takes us back to the post-colonial and missionary period, and the “Zamfara” phase. I will occasionally refer to these phases as “BZ” and “AZ,” meaning “before” and “after,” with the Zamfara sharia declaration in late 1999 being the dividing point.

Apart from missionaries around independence days and a few politicians, Christians in Northern Nigeria did not really address sharia issues till the first Constituent Assembly (CA) of 1977–1978. At that time all hell broke loose. The country was brought to the brink. Since then, it has been a hot issue almost without let-up. The Zamfara Declaration of late 1999 gave it new impetus, but little in the way of new ideas.

I assume you have read Volume 6. I also assume you have read Volume 5, for it explains the Christian attitude towards secularism, an issue underlying most Christian discussions of sharia. Without either of these, you may not appreciate all the papers and discussions in this volume. Actually, you should read *all* the previous volumes for a full appreciation of this one. Read them or not, this volume will forego all discussions of secularism and its derivatives, but do understand that the question of secularism underlies this entire volume.<sup>1</sup>

This volume is an exception to the others in this series in at least two ways. First, apart from some of my own interspersed comments, two chapters are written wholly by Nigerian Christians. There is that of the late Wilson Sabiya of the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria (LCCN), who was a leader in the development of an early Christian reaction towards sharia in the context of his own denomination as well as in two major ecumenical organizations, The Fellowship of the Churches of Christ in Nigeria (*TEKAN—Tarayyar Ekklesiyoyin Kristi a Nigeriya*) and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). Then there is Yusufu Turaki, who has occupied several leading positions in his denomination,

Evangelical Churches of West Africa (ECWA), as well as in CAN at national level. He wrote some papers in reaction to the experience Christians had with the imposition of sharia and of Islam in general that make up Chapter 7. Unfortunately, considerations of length again determined selection. This chapter contains two documents of Turaki. A much longer one had to be exiled to the *Companion CD*.<sup>2</sup> Both of these leaders have adopted very aggressive poses against sharia due to the aggressive treatment their people have received from the Muslim community. Chapter 8 treats Plateau State and COCIN because of their special place in the North. Sabiya's writings hail from the BZ era; those of Turaki, from the AZ days. Sabiya was a friend with whom I had extensive discussions. Though he is in no position to approve my publishing his papers, I know that he would be delighted to have them more widely available. I am grateful for the *carte blanche* that Turaki, also a friend, has given me.

Secondly, while in the previous volumes all chapters deal with Nigeria in general, especially with the North as a whole, in this one you will find one chapter devoted to one single state, namely Plateau. Plateau is not a sharia state, but attempts are being made to turn it into one—or so, at least, Plateau Christians see it. They regard their state as the buffer state that stops the onward march of Islam and prevents Muslims from carrying out their alleged “Grand Plan.” They also regard the current bloody struggles in the state as a continuation of the pre-colonial efforts to subdue it under the Sultanate of Sokoto and of the terrible slave raids to which Muslims subjected many Middle Belt people. The Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN) will be singled out for special attention.

As in the introductions to some of the other volumes, I reiterate that a major point of this series is to let you hear Nigerian voices. In this volume, that means not only many Nigerian quotations but even entire chapters. These are *Nigerian* writers, not Westerners. This strong Nigerian presence brings with it two

important features. Firstly, a Westerner may be hard put to catch the emotions that are very much part of the scene and that often shape the logic. It is not always *objective, rational* logic we are dealing with. *Emotional* logic is also part of the scene, *legitimately* so.

In addition, Nigerians have their own way of expressing themselves. As there are several legitimate and distinct brands of English in the world, including British, Indian, Australian and American, so there is a distinctly Nigerian brand. One prominent feature in Nigerian writers is that they do not always adhere to the restraints of parallel structure, whether that is the structure of an entire publication or of a single sentence. Another feature is that of long run-on sentences strung together by endless series of *ands*. Verbosity is common. I take the liberty to occasionally “regularize” a sentence here and there without so indicating. In addition, I usually do not indicate ellipses in quotations, except in quotations from publications that are likely in international circulation.

My heavy dependence on Nigerian writings is not because I always agree with all that is quoted. As a Christian, I quite frequently disagree with Muslim quotations in other volumes without indicating it. The same holds true for materials from Christians in this volume. They are brought in because they are representative of the particular issue or perspective dealt with at any given time. Often I may agree with the general picture but disagree with some particular details. I do not usually indicate such disagreements, except when they are particularly important to me. I may also throw in an occasional personal comment or question indicating doubt or disagreement. Or just a little humour! Here is where I—quite consciously—fall off the academic track.

A point of terminology. Starting with this volume, except in quotations, I will avoid using negative terms such as “non-Muslim” and “unIslamic” when these refer mostly to Christians. I am quite aware that there are more religions or worldviews in Nigeria besides these two. However, this book and, indeed, this entire series are

concerned mostly with those two religions. Except for quotations, it will not do to describe Christians in such negative terms. They are a people in their own right, not merely “non-this” or “non-that.” It is time Nigerian Christians see themselves positively, not merely as “non-.” Or should I turn the tables in this book and refer to Muslims as “non-Christians”? I confess to being tempted. You know, just to create a balance!

I continue the policies I developed in the last couple of volumes with respect to endnotes and appendices. Endnotes contain just enough information to locate the item in the Bibliography for further identification. Some contain additional information. In my bid to limit the size of these books, I have developed my own style of endnotes that is brief and, I believe, clear. For the same reason, *the appendices are published only on the Companion CD*, with apologies for the inconvenience.

I once again remind you that there is this *Companion CD-Rom* running parallel to this series. It contains all the volumes completed so far, most of them in the state at which I submitted them to the publishers. Among other things, this means different pagination. Eventually, I hope the CD will contain the published versions. In addition, it contains over 1,000 articles on related Christian and Muslim subjects as well as materials on Nigeria’s external debt and its campaign against corruption. It has become a gold mine of information on the two religions and these extra subjects. And then I have thrown in a number of other publications of mine that have previously been published as articles or as smaller books. So, a lot of Boeriana as well. Of special interest to Kuyper fans is an article of his that I translated into English and published under the title *You Can Do Greater Things than Christ: Demons, Miracles, Healing and Science*.

References to articles on the CD abound in the bibliography. Sometimes you may have problems finding an article. That could

be due to organization of folders and files. If you cannot find a file, use your computer's search function.

Giving you a glimpse behind the curtain, I must confess that the division of the materials into chapters 2–5 has not been easy. However, most readers prefer shorter chapters. So I was forced to make chapter divisions along lines that are not always clear. Whether I made the right decisions is for you to judge, but here they are. One chapter deals specifically with governments, but you will also find governmental issues in other chapters. The problem is that no matter what sharia issue you are dealing with, you scratch just a little below the surface and one government or another pops up, for government is omnipresent in Nigerian life, uppermost in the Nigerian mind, the source of all evil and of all solutions. Even in this chapter, selection is somewhat arbitrary. In the government chapter I restrict myself to the administration of the country or of a state and to people closely associated with that administration. Government institutions like schools, hospitals, courts and even police are all treated in other chapters. Often the actions taken by those institutions are not necessarily government decisions and may not reflect government policy. One is often left in limbo. Sometimes it simply was not possible to separate a government action or statement from an event described elsewhere. Well, artificial as it is, this division will have to do for our purpose. Such is life. But with this book you do have the facts and opinions at your fingertips.

Another glimpse. There was going to be a third way in which this volume was to differ from the others. I was going to include a chapter on Muslim reactions to Christian critique of sharia. In other words, this was going to be a Muslim chapter in a volume dedicated to Christian reactions. It would have been a first. Originally, that chapter was going to be the last chapter in Volume 6. When that volume became too lengthy, I planned to include it in this volume. Sorry, folks. I am now reserving it for Volume 8,

where it will constitute Chapter 2. Cheer up. Apart from skipping the chapter altogether, no further postponement is possible, since that will be the last volume.

Muslims, you had your say in Volumes 2, 4 and 6. At that time I asked Christians to sit back and listen carefully to your opinions and evaluate them sympathetically and responsibly. I wanted Christians to understand your goals, your fears, your agreements and disagreements, your hopes and anger. Now it is *your* turn once again to sit back and listen to the Christian side of things. Suspend your judgment for a while and just let it all soak in. Try to understand and feel as they do. When you've read the last page, you can don your critical hat again—but throw away the envelope of anger and contempt that was mixed up with your critiques. *Hucewa dai!*<sup>β</sup>

Happy reading, everyone.

