

# INTRODUCTION TO PART 2

*Kuyper...envisioned a world structured according to the ordinances of God. It is true that the Netherlands scarcely resembles Kuyper's vision, but the failures of his followers provide me with caution, not disillusionment.*

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Well, here it finally is: the point for which many of you, my friends and readers, have been waiting; the point to which all these volumes have been leading and for which people have been pressing me. This is not to suggest that all the preceding volumes and chapters have no significance and meaning of their own. There is plenty there for serious thought for everyone. However, while most of the preceding consists of discussion about *Nigerian* actions and opinions with occasional comments from me thrown in, here *I, the chairman of the meeting*, am the main speaker and offer some thoughts, theories, perspectives and proposals for action of my own. Here the voice of the expatriate missionary with deep respect for *all* the people of Nigeria comes to the fore. I will be happy for you to welcome me!

I like the words of Lamin Sanneh in the acknowledgements of his 1997 book. He was motivated to look for “a fresh synthesis, reconstruction, analysis and reflection.” That led him “to readjust everything else.”<sup>2</sup> That is the intent of this Part 2 as well. The introduction of Kuyperian thought in Volumes 1 and 5 here leads to wide-ranging readjustments of our traditional parameters. Sanneh’s readjustment is somewhat different from mine. While he in principle rejects the secular separation of religion from the marketplace, he still seems to adhere to some residue of the dualistic worldview. Kuyperian thought will take us beyond that.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout this series, a major point is the rejection of the separation of politics from religion that weakens so many Christians. In view of the fact that I often will be referring to Sanneh’s opinions in support of my own and with deep appreciation for his insights, I want it well understood that I take issue with a strong statement by him in the Acknowledgements of his 1997 publication. He supports the opinion of some Muslims “that religion without political relevance is worthless...”<sup>4</sup> I strongly agree that such religion is seriously weakened and distorted, but to render it “worthless” goes too far. It may be politically worthless, damaging even, but spiritually? A dualistic pious Christian is not out of divine grace and can count on the promises in the Bible to apply to her. *I want it clearly understood that I do not judge the spiritual status of dualistic Christians or want to excommunicate them, though I want them to overcome that dualism in the worst way.*

Note the title of Part 2: “Parameters...,” not “Solutions.” I remind you of my comments in the Introduction to this series.<sup>5</sup> Humility may not be my most outstanding virtue, but I *am* humble enough to realize that I will not have final and concrete solutions to Nigeria’s religious challenges, not if these have eluded even Nigeria’s own wisest so far. So, parameters, merely parameters. This is *mainly* a call for shifts in *parameters within which solutions must be found*, not for specific solutions. In addition, I throw in

various suggestions, proposals and advice here and there, but these are merely for your consideration to adapt or reject totally. I ask you, whether Christian or Muslim, to hear me out. I am hopeful that a combination of ideas that have emerged from my 30-years experience in Nigeria, listening to and weighing Nigerian opinions and then applying Kuyperian perspectives to the same can lead us towards some helpful new vistas.<sup>6</sup> That combination produces proposed shifts towards new parameters.

But I go beyond that. Often I advance questions that need answering, identify problems that need solving and suggest ideas that need further exploration. *Sometimes I put these very hesitantly, not being sure of their viability or political usefulness*, but there they are for better or for worse. Someone will zero in on one or two of these and explore them further. When this happens, I have reached another goal, even if it eventually gets rejected or amended beyond recognition. But now and then I do make outright proposals or demands that usually arise out of our shared human nature or out of contradictions that sometimes engulf us.

I do not expect anyone to accept my perspective and parameters lock, stock and barrel. I *do* ask that you consider them seriously, even if they challenge your current thinking, and *then* pick and choose the parts you consider appropriate and turn them into something more genuinely Nigerian. That is the way Nigerians have always dealt with foreign input. I may be a foreigner, but I *have* lived among you as an adult for 30 years and spent an additional thirteen years doing research in the Nigerian situation. And I *have* been asked by Nigerians how I have come to understand the culture so well.

Hopefully, the process I am suggesting may help equip you to shift your parameters towards a more *wholistic and pluralistic* solution that will create room for both religions to be themselves, but open to some compromises demanded by the multi-religio-cultural situation. We cannot pretend that only my religion counts, when

there are 65 million plus adherents of another religion out there! But before anything else, I advise you to re-read Kuyperian perspectives I have already outlined in previous volumes.<sup>7</sup>

This is a book about both what to *think and do*, with emphasis on the latter. However, proper action always requires proper understanding of the issues. The African Forum on Religion and Government (AFREG) in 2006 called for the development of a new theoretical framework on which to construct new governance and better politics.<sup>8</sup> Hence, encouragement for proper theory and understanding also features heavily. Of course, that, too, is an action. So, I frequently recommend a change of attitude or of perspective, on basis of which people can then take the action they themselves derive from it.

Just to whet your appetite for what lies ahead, let me throw out a few hooks with bait in the form of some random praise and critique of Islam that either has been checked out in previous volumes or will be fleshed out further in the chapters ahead. Muslims have a lot going for them with their strong emphasis on wholistic religion and equally strong rejection of secularism. Here Christians have much to learn from them. However, Muslim ideology often does not take into account the destructive tendencies of power and of alliances of religion with governments. History, both Christian and Muslim, is replete with such destructive tendencies that are acknowledged by the best scholars on both sides. Responsible Christians have come to recognize this, but the frequent Muslim shrugging aside of this very real history of theirs makes them unrealistic and unbelievable. There is a problem of “one-eyed” ideology that recognizes violence on the part of the West but is blind to its own. Throughout this series I draw attention to this tendency as does Ann Mayer in her critique of Abul Mawdudi, an Islamist activist and scholar whom we will meet more in these pages. Mayer criticizes his claim that Muslim armies, unlike those of the West, have never raped and otherwise mistreated women. Mayer wrote,

“...contrary to his boasts, there is no evidence that Muslim armies have historically acquitted themselves any better in their treatment of vulnerable women....” Then she reminds us of “the extensive rapes...in Afghanistan and Algeria and after the 1990 Iraqi conquest of Kuwait” as well as the 1971 Pakistani army rapes of Bangladeshi women. In view of such histories, Mawdudi’s “insistence that a Muslim army had never raped women” is amazing. In Mawdudi’s own words, “It has never happened that after the conquest of a foreign country, the Muslim army has gone about raping the women....” Of course, he does allow for “individual lapses,” a common denial mechanism. Mayer comments, “One is prompted to inquire why this curious, contrary-to-fact assertion...”<sup>9</sup> Mayer has her own explanation for this feature. Personally, I believe, it is *mainly* caused by this Muslim “one-eyed” ideology, by a weak Muslim understanding of the depth of human evil and sin. Mawdudi’s denial of public facts may be strange, but it is typical of Muslim thinking that we have seen time and again in preceding volumes. Christians, of course, have their own blind spots. They must, above all, get rid of their semi-secular dualism that blinds them to other truths that Nigerian Muslims remind them of time and again, another issue addressed repeatedly in this series. OK, have I caught your attention?

Christians would do well to weigh some of the social ideas of Islam. You will find them explained in Volumes 2, 4 and 6 in this series. Some of them are correctives and reminders of Christian ideas that have been distorted or even simply lost under the weight of secularism and capitalism.<sup>10</sup> These Christian distortions constitute artificial barriers to Muslim understanding genuine Christian faith. They are “straw men” that must be done away with if we are to work towards a new era of cooperation. They even are barriers to Christian *self*-understanding. Nevertheless, as important as these ideas are, Turaki’s emphasis on the practical importance of Christian *experience* with sharia as over against ideas must be heard loud and clear.<sup>11</sup>

As I write this chapter, I am well aware of Danjuma Byang's warning. After eloquently describing Nigeria's diversity and uniqueness, he cautions that Nigeria cannot fit into any foreign or indigenous structure. Something new is needed; old solutions do not cut it anymore. If the diversity of the country is not considered in developing any model, the model is doomed to failure.<sup>12</sup> How true! I hope that what follows in these chapters reflects that awareness adequately.

A unique feature of these chapters is a series of *study guides*. These are aimed at helping you develop a more wholistic and pluralistic Kuyperian perspective by paying attention to its details. I advise you to organize a small group to study these guides, section by section, and then to answer the questions. *You might even try to establish a mixed group of Christians and Muslims to do this study jointly.* That could really make for an interesting and challenging experience for people of either faith. Needless to say, both groups would have to respect each other's opinions, even when there is disagreement or misunderstanding. If you are the group leader, give plenty of space for discussion and further questions. You are not to play the role of a know-it-all teacher so much as to serve as a facilitator who keeps the discussion on track and ensures openness and respect among the members towards each other.

Please understand the following. Do not answer the questions in the Study Guides too quickly, simply on basis of how you have always felt or thought. Think about them in terms of the textual materials that you have read. Open your mind. Allow those new ideas to percolate in your brain to challenge your previous thinking. If you come out of these exercises without any change of heart or mind, you probably have not been serious about the issues. That is likely going to mean that you are not prepared to follow new paths in your relationships with Muslims. You will remain stuck in the old ruts that have not worked. That would be a pity indeed. **The guides themselves are found in Appendix 105.**

Another unique feature is the frequent references to Canada's secular regime. This is mostly in the endnotes. I am waging a mini battle against the extremes of Canada's secularism. After all, this book is being written in Vancouver, a secular hot spot. The reason for this feature is to warn Nigerian Christians that their flirtation with secularism is like playing with fire. It will eventually devour them and leave them spiritually and philosophically defenseless over against both of the aggressive and wholistic worldviews we are facing, Islam and secularism.

Another new feature in these chapters is the frequent use of *italics*. Whenever I make a suggestion for something to think about or to be done, I put it in italics for emphasis. Often I place such italicized materials in *boxes* if it is very strategic. So, watch out for these signals and pay special attention to them. They may call for some serious reconsideration of an old idea or for some action(s) to be taken.

I am going to discontinue the common practice of referring to Christians and others as "non-Muslims." Though there are Traditionalists, some cultists and a few atheists in the country, this series and these parameters are basically about Christians and Muslims. I will refer to both by their name. If the situation demands other terms, I will use "non-Christian" and subsume others under that term. *It is time to realise that Christians are a people with their own identity, not merely non-entities to be described only in negative terms like "non-Muslims!"*

I draw your attention here to an issue of *principle* versus *practice*. A common feature running through all these volumes that you may have noticed is that I have often expressed myself positively and appreciatively with respect to many Muslim *principles*, especially on worldview issues such as their view on religion and the role of mankind. This appreciation will shine through in these chapters as well. However, Muslims often become offensive in *practice*. I expect that some Christians may find fault with my agree-

ment with some Muslim arguments, but they should not. For, with some exceptions, Nigerian Christian objections to Muslim issues are more often aimed at Muslim *practice* rather than *principle*. So, you will find both strands woven into these chapters with my consequent approval and disapproval respectively. You will also find both approval and disapproval of things Christian in these pages. I call upon both to open their minds and hearts to consider both sides at all times. Along with my fellow Vancouverite, Irshad Manji, whom I have never met, I call upon Muslims to come clean and tell the whole story. The combination of persecution with your peace and tolerance emphasis just does not cut it. *That* is what makes yours [perhaps] the most misunderstood religion—and the most suspect. You are giving us two incompatible messages: peace and intolerance, not to say violence. The ball is in your court. But don't worry: Christians will also find the ball in their park.<sup>13</sup>

It may be well to remind you that I am writing from the perspective of a social theologian and missionary. I am neither economist nor political scientist, neither businessman nor politician. That means I can easily go beyond my depth in some of these subjects. It is a risk that always comes with multidisciplinary stuff that I *need* to take, since it is high time that these subjects be viewed from the missionary angle. If political scientists c.s. are tempted to shake their heads at this wild missionary, they should realize that this wild missionary often shakes his head at their narrowly-defined economic and political pursuits. I am sure someone could easily produce an economic or political equivalent to the controversial movie “Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed.”<sup>14</sup>

This is not primarily an academic book. The entire series, including this book, is based on responsible academic-level research and reflection, but I do not restrict myself to academic conventions. Sometimes I claim the freedom of inserting a personal note and even a humorous statement. More than any other part of this series, this Part 2 has a strong personal side to it. Here I sometimes

throw caution to the wind and offer suggestions that may sometimes seem wild, but they are worthy of consideration in a situation where thinking within the traditional box just won't do it anymore. And sometimes the cries of my fellow Christians get the best of me and strain my objectivity. When I heard their cries in response to the 2008 Jos riots, my emotions threatened to overturn all the good advice and suggestions I offer in these pages. But a book does not have to be academic to be good or useful. Sometimes it is better if it is closer to the life of the people whom it aims to address. Some of it will be, I promise, while other parts are more for theoreticians, who, according to AFREG at least, are also needed to shed some light on the way ahead.<sup>15</sup>

I have just reminded you that I am a Christian missionary, that is, a practitioner of Christian *da'wah*, and thus some may suspect that in these final chapters I will attempt to convert my readers to Christ. I would be a poor Christian missionary if I would not rejoice at such a development! But that is not the goal of this series or these chapters. This series is not about Christians and Muslims converting each other or *worshipping* together so much as *understanding each other and living together* in one nation. This is neither an attempt at conversion nor at merging the two into one common religion.

This is a pre-emptory strike at secularisation to prevent the development of a process that could lead to outright hostility to all religion as has developed in some Western countries where people became tired of religion itself. Secondly, this is to equip Christians with a more robust, wholistic and realistic version of Christianity and to acquaint Muslims with an upgraded version of the same.

I expect both religions to remain true to themselves, even to become *more* so than they may have in the past, and to remove the unnecessary obstacles and “straw men” that have caused so much

bloodshed and prevented peaceful co-existence. If some of these obstacles are inherent in one or both, we will need to search for necessary compromises, updates, realistic re-alignments and even sacrifices to make the current inescapable situation of multi-religion possible and bearable.

Compromise is not a novelty in Islam. As Lamin Sanneh put it, though “Islam rejects the rigid separation of religion and politics..., nevertheless, mainstream thought still supports at least a notional separation of religion and politics for eminently religious reasons. One general approach is the distinction Muslims draw between doctrinal stipulations and historical circumstances, between the external formulations of the jurists and the inner reality of life.” He quoted from the Islamic scholar, H. A. R. Gibb: “Between the real content of Muslim thought and its juristic expression there is a certain dislocation” that prevents us from inferring “reality from the outer form.” There is thus a valid “distinction between formal doctrine and the content of life.”<sup>16</sup> That is to say, we cannot simply draw conclusions about reality from classic documents or established doctrine. Compromise is part of Muslim history and tradition, something that the militants have not recognized. But it will be a necessary component of any final agreement eventually reached. *Our own revered Sardauna signed for Common Law as a compromise! It was either that or something far worse.*<sup>17</sup>

If certain problems arise from distortions of one or the other religion, I call upon its leaders to exorcise the factors that lead to them. I do not expect that every problem, obstacle and source of tension will be removed, for the core visions of the two religions are too different, if not antithetical, for that to happen. But I am not setting my sights too high, I believe, when at a minimum *I set my hopes on mutual goodwill and determination to achieve a tolerable and reasonable management of tension.*<sup>18</sup> Since most adherents of both religions advocate democracy, the following comment from

Margaret Somerville of McGill University, Montreal, is relevant: The genius of democracy is that “it allows us to live peacefully together despite our differences by finding where we can agree and *holding in creative tension* the issues we disagree about, rather than engaging in destructive conflict.”<sup>19</sup> I am advising all the faithful to put their best foot forward in a national competition to contribute positively towards the development of justice and peace for all.

