

RELIGIOUS ISSUES

Religion is the motor of development

Hassan al-Turabi¹

Religion is not the opium of the people, but the vitamin of the weak.

Regis Debray²

▲ INTRODUCTION

The focus in this chapter is on core issues of religion that may seem somewhat theoretical while you read this chapter, but that will re-appear in later chapters in connection with concrete issues. So, this one lays the foundation for subsequent chapters. What is being described here is not some particular area of culture called “religion” that exists alongside other cultural segments but a very different paradigm. It is my considered opinion that Christians in Nigeria need to change their view of religion by freeing it from the shackles of their semi-secular dualism. In fact, they can learn much

from Muslims about the nature of religion, as they can from the Kuyperian tradition on basis of which I address these issues.

▲ THE NATURE OF RELIGION

Many Christians and certainly most secularists see religion as one department or segment of life and culture alongside all the others. There is an economic segment of life, a political one and then there is religion. Some people work in the economic segment of culture; others, in the religious segment and most of them are known as clergy. In fact, there are Christians who by definition reject a wholistic religion as *genuine* religion. Sam Solomon, a Christian Arab, is a former imam and professor of sharia for whom I have the highest respect. He seems to have learned his “Christian” lesson very well. At a conference organized by ECP Centre in 2008, Solomon urged attendees to understand that Islam is not exclusively a religion. Rather, he said, it is an “all-encompassing system.” “It is a political system. It is an economic system. It is a sociological system. It is a comprehensive way of looking at things that includes all aspects of life.”³ So, according to this brother, only part of Islam is religion, while there is a large slice of life, most of life in fact, that can be carved out as politics, economics, sociology, etc., but that is not religion. It is something else. Solomon’s view is the very opposite of the perspective that shapes this series. It is all these components together that make the Islamic religion what it is. With all of his fiery devotion to God, Solomon has been taken in by the rawest form of dualism one finds among Christians, the very thing this series is trying to help Christians overcome.

The Kuyperian perspective places religion not alongside other segments as just another department of life, but regards it as underlying all other aspects or departments. To be sure, there is a religious sector to life that we associate with churches, mosques and temples and that is a very important aspect of religion. Those are

often the mechanisms that keep the fires of religion burning. But the essence of religion is not found in ecclesiastical or mosque organizations that stand alongside other cultural institutions; the essence is a heart-based commitment underlying and shaping everything else we do and even think.

Egbert Schuurman, a retired Dutch professor of Kuyperian philosophy, put it this way:

Let me be clear about what I mean by the term "religion." When the media pay attention to "religion" they usually treat it as one of many factors or variables in human life, distinct from, say, sports, politics or science. However, if we look carefully at religious communities and various types of societies around the world we can see that religion is not just a typical function among others but is, rather, the root from which the different branches of life sprout and grow and from which they are continually nourished. Religion is of radical and integral importance: it concerns the deepest root of human existence and integrates human life into a coherent whole.⁴

According to German-American Kuyperian philosopher Evan Runner, with the heart at the centre of our existence and the seat of our faith and commitments, "our whole life is religion."⁵ In fact an entire *Festschrift* dedicated to him has that as its title: *Life is Religion*.⁶ The educational creed of the predecessor of the Toronto-based ICS begins with the assertion that "Human life in its entirety is religion."⁷

Because this is such a foreign notion to some and calls up resistance in others, let me devote another paragraph or two to the same subject. [Repetition, I am told, is of the essence of education.] We speak of different areas or aspects of life and usually consider religion to be one of them. If you think of religion as an institution like church, mosque or temple, then religion is indeed one segment among others. Some describe the church or mosque

as “*institute*,” while there is also the church or mosque as “*organism*,” a subject on which I expand under another heading within this chapter. The latter refers to the living, pulsating community holding a religion, worldview or belief system that constitutes the essence of religion by which they are guided throughout their lives. The essence is that worldview and faith underlying all of life. The institute may be in the hands of some clergy or imam, but not the social aspect of this worldview/religion that is part of everyone’s deepest being, in fact, the core, and gives shape to the life of individuals and to the culture of society. The same distinction can also be expressed as the “central ecclesiastical *institute*” over against the “social *organism*.”

This perspective is somewhat similar to that of classic Islam. As Mohamad Rachid recently put it, in Islam all activities constitute worship of God. Our sole purpose is to worship God in all we do—a classic Kuyperian line.⁸ Failure to worship God in and through the marketplace and all other cultural sectors hollows out the meaning of our ecclesiastical liturgies, except in so far as these aim at reviving our marketplace worship.⁹

Paul Marshall wrote succinctly on this foundational view of religion. Allow me a few quotations:

Religion refers to the deepest commitment and deepest identity of a person or group. An expanded concept of religion allows us to take account of the fact that our lives reflect and are rooted in a particular view of the meaning of life: of the nature of society; of what human beings really are; and of their essential responsibilities, whether to self, society, or another source.

...religion is particularly concerned with the roots of our lives. Indeed, the root of culture is religion, in the sense that the basic patterns of our society are shaped by our basic commitment and belief in life, which is, in turn, our religion. Our

“god” is that in which we place our faith and trust, and our culture expresses what lies in our heart.

Under the caption “Life is Religion,” Marshall re-affirmed the basic Christian assertion that

All [human] action in God’s world can be and should be service to God and our neighbours. There is therefore no specific area of life which we can call “religious” as though other areas of life were not “religious.” To put it briefly, we may say that “life is religion,” that our religion is what we believe, think, say and do each moment of our lives. As...[someone] remarked, “I can tell more about your faith from reading your cheque book than your prayer book.” Everything we do is religious in that it is done in faithfulness or in unfaithfulness to God.

This means that we should never consider a person, a corporation, a book or a government as “non-religious.” They are always religious in that they reflect either a turning toward God or a turning away from God in their activities. Of course, they may not know and they may even deny it—they usually do, in fact—but it still remains true. Everybody serves somebody. If people do not serve God, then they will serve something else. The “something else” that people serve is what the Bible calls “idols.”¹⁰

By repeating some materials from Volume 5, I intend to lure you to get hold of that volume and read further on the subject of the nature of religion and related issues. I cannot repeat all of that here. But I do refer you in the same book to the Kuyperian perspective on the *centrality of the heart in human life and religion*. “Heart” here does not mean “the [physical] organ of feeling, but that [mysterious] place in a man where God works, and from out of which He exercises an influence also upon the head and the brain.”¹¹ As the King James version of

Proverbs 23: 7 says of man, “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.”

Here again that all-pervasive Kuyperian parallel to Islam. Lumbard summarized the anti-Fundamentalist views of the Indian Muslim scholar Maulana A. A. Thanvi, who posited that the root of all problems is to be found in “the illness of the heart.” Commented Lumbard, “From the perspective of traditional Islam, which Thanvi represents, it is only when the heart has been treated that political transformation can occur.” Musa Ibrahim, a law student at BUK, advised Muslims to “strive hard to Islamize our hearts...”¹² It is a sound we have heard before from both sides.¹³ It is a core component of both perspectives.

Continued discussion along this line in Volume 5, leads to the following surprising insight. It “dethrones reason from its central place....” Though reason plays such a central place in Kuyperian thought that some accuse it of intellectualism, the heart has taken over the throne with reason sitting at its right as its servant. Emmanuel Kant wrote his famous book, *Religion within the Bounds of Reason*. Nicholas Wolterstorff, a retired Kuyperian professor from Yale, countered it humorously with his own book under the title *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*. Right on! Beneath Wolterstorff’s title and in his book is his Kuyperian contention that secularism is not a matter of reason over religion or faith. Secularism itself is a belief in human autonomy and our ability to solve our problems rationally on our own. It is a belief system that is not subject to proof or verification anymore than are the tenets of Christianity and Islam. Kuyperianism along with Islam concludes from the above and some other features of secularism that it does indeed have all the trappings of religion, but for that you need to return to Volume 5.¹⁴

Religion has its seat in the deepest core of a human being. You cannot escape it. We all believe. We all base our lives on our deepest values, often hidden to ourselves. Hence, both Islam and

Kuyperians define the human race first of all as “man the believer,” with no gender overtones. Allow me a revision of British philosopher Rene Descartes’ revered historical Latin declaration, “*Cogito; ergo sum*” or “I think; therefore I am” to read, “*Credo; ergo sum*” or “I believe; therefore I am.” Some define our race primarily in terms of rationality, the biological, sexual or economic. As important as these features are to human life, in this series I define the human race at its core as a race of believers.

The importance of these perspectives in terms of Christian-Muslim relations is that Christians along with secular Muslims cannot get away with resorting to secularism as a neutral platform where the two religions can meet in peace. When you try that, you have merely jumped from one boat into another.

Secularism is as subjective and faith-based as all the other worldviews or religions. The other worldviews are as rational as is secularism. In all cases it is reason motivated by the deeper loyalties, commitments and beliefs way down deep in the “heart.”

Under the influence of secularism, many Christians have lost this comprehensive view of religion and have reduced it to a mere slice of life that concentrates on private life and on the church as institute. This makes it difficult for them to understand the more Kuyperian and Islamic wholistic views of religion as spanning all of life. However, this wholistic perspective is not as exotic as you may think; it is actually held by a wide range of people. Though Animists may not be well represented among writers and scholars, the entire global range of Animism has this wholism at its very core. Sub-Saharan Africans and North American Aborigines, known variously as “Indians” or as “First Nations” in Canada, may never have heard of each other before the days of “exploration” and colonialism, but both have this wholism at the core of their religio-

cultures. It is true not only of these ancient cultures, the Bible and Islam, but even some people in the midst of Western secular academia share it. Canadian ethicist Mark Wexler of Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, writing about spirituality in the modern workplace, asserted that “whether workers and managers know it, they’re always living out spiritual principles.” Wexler pointed out the subconscious beliefs underpinning what we do. He defined “spirituality broadly as those values that give all of us, including atheists, a sense of meaning and purpose.”¹⁵ Welcome to a very large crowd of billions of people!

The ex-Muslim Roman Catholic Gambian scholar from Yale University, Lamin Sanneh, affirms one of the major theses of this series, namely, that the West and most Christians throughout the world are prevented from understanding wholistic Islam by their dualistically restricted definition of religion.¹⁶ You are asked to study the issues embedded in the following questions so that you can achieve a broader perspective on religion and meet Muslims as equals, not as cowering dualists who have nothing to contribute. Again, the need here is for a change in perspective and a shift to a new paradigm within which you are invited to rethink sharia and related issues.

Study Guide 6 — Religion—What and Where (Appendix 105)

▲ CREATION ORDER AND ORDINANCES _____

“Creation order” and “creation ordinances” are two concepts about which Nigerians hear little. These are historical concepts not invented by Kuyperians, but they are prominent components in their theorizing, not the least in the areas of politics, government and science. Since these topics feature prominently in some of the chapters ahead, I briefly introduce them by means of some quotations interspersed with a few comments of my own. I do not argue

them so much as offer them to you as useful tools in the Christian toolbox for dialogue with Muslims.¹⁷

Gordon Spykman begins his discussion on the subject as follows:

By His Word God established a well-ordered creation. By that same Word He continually calls it to order. His Word is our life. For by it He put in place the permanently normative environment for our life together in His world. This network of structures and functions, governed by creational laws, manifests His loving care for all creatures. Every creature, each in its own unique way, is subject to this constant yet dynamic ecosystem of creational laws. Compliance with it is not an odious burden. For it was not imposed by some alien force. The creation order is evidence of the caring hand of the Creator reaching out to secure the well-being of His creatures.... Willing obedience to this life-enveloping..., shalom-enhancing framework of law and order brings with it freedom, righteousness, and joy. It enables us to become all we are meant to be.

Spykman then applies the above to science in an interesting and profound way that demonstrates the close positive connection between religion and science in the Kuyperian perspective:¹⁸

No science...can establish the meaning of things. That is given with creation. We live in a predefined world. All scientific endeavour...is therefore a discovery process. ...It can only describe by empirical analysis the data and phenomena at hand. Its tools cannot penetrate to an original and fundamental explanation of the meaning of things. For this we are dependent on revelation, reflexively present in creation and noetically disclosed in Scripture. What are...called scientific laws...are but fallible human attempts to account for the way

we understand God's Word as it holds for the ordered life of His creatures. Insight into the... meaning of reality calls for an understanding of the creation order. We are therefore guilty of a reductionist superficiality if in the name of the scientific method we seek to eliminate from consideration the revelation, and thus also the religious meaning of things which is embedded in the creation order.

Spykman goes on to argue that creation does not “await our attempts to lend it meaning. Creation *is* meaning” that we have to discover. After this, Spykman explores how these creation ordinances are to be applied in marriage, state life and community.¹⁹

As Jan Dengerink, a Dutch Kuyperian philosopher, put it, “The creation ordinances are powers established and continually maintained by God in creation, by means of which He gives natural as well as normative guidance to the world, and energizes, determines, gives direction, upholds, and preserves it in its activity.” According to Psalm [“*Zabura*” in Hausa-ised Arabic] 119:90-91, “...You established the earth and it endures. Your laws endure to this day, for all things serve you.”²⁰

Spykman quoted from Herman Bavinck, a contemporary of Kuyper and a co-founder of the Kuyperian school, who wrote a century ago, “Everything was created with its own nature and is based on ordinances appointed by God for it. Sun and moon and stars have their own peculiar tasks; plants and animals and man have their own distinct natures.” From another Bavinck publication:

The Christian worldview opposes autonomy and anarchy with all its power. It holds that man is not autonomous, but is always and everywhere bound by laws not invented by man, but set forth by God as the rule for life. In religion and morality, in the family, society, and the state, everywhere there are ideas, norms which stand above man. They form a unity among themselves and find their origin and continuation in

*the Creator and Lawgiver of the universe. These norms are the most precious treasures entrusted to mankind, the basis for all societal institutions.*²¹

Some Christians have argued that we do not need all this theorizing, that the Bible and its Decalogue are sufficient. If a truth is not found there, we don't need to bother. Dooyeweerd responds with rhetorical questions: "Is it not true that God placed all the spheres of temporal life under His laws and ordinances...? Are not all these laws grounded in God's creation order? Can we find explicit Scriptural texts for all of them? If not, shall we not acknowledge that God gave man the task to discover them? And admitting this, can we still hold that it makes no difference whether we start from the... Word of God or from the guidance of unscriptural... motives?" We cannot derive criteria for historical developments "from the Ten Commandments, for they were not meant to save us from investigating God's creational ordinances." "...One needs insight into the specific ordinances that God established.... There is no easy path to such insight. It requires investigation." This discussion is found under the heading "Biblicism,"²² a concept Dooyeweerd rejects with these questions.

▲ CHURCH/MOSQUE: INSTITUTE AND ORGANISM —

Discussions about church and state are usually beclouded by the general failure to acknowledge an important distinction between two aspects of the Church, namely those of church/mosque as *institute* and as *organism*. "Beclouded" is actually a weak word here. "Derail" comes closer to the truth. When on basis of the church-state separation someone objects to a politician bringing his Christian faith to bear on his politics, then you know you are dealing with a novice to this area of concern. The separation formula is meant to prevent any religion, denomination or some other

worldview community from occupying a privileged position in relationship to government to the disadvantage of all others. It is not meant to squash religion or marginalize it so much as to protect both religion and government, for historical experience is that such relationships damage both. It was never meant to exclude religious influence from the public square or to prevent citizens from exercising their religious convictions in politics.

Luis Lugo begins a book he edited on this subject with a quotation from the First Amendment to the American Constitution: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” He comments,

The free exercise clause that immediately follows, clearly points toward a more expansive understanding of religious freedom, one that goes considerably beyond the question of church-state separation. Does it not also include the idea that citizens should be free to live out the totality of their lives in accordance with their deepest convictions? If that is indeed the case, then disestablishment cannot be made synonymous with religious freedom but must be seen instead as a basic precondition of its attainment.

The rest of the book unpacks that entire issue in great detail.²³

*The distinction is basically between the official ecclesiastical structures—the **institute**—and the members as they live out their lives in society—the **organism**.* Bolt describes the distinction as “a cornerstone of ... Kuyper’s public theology” and thus very significant.²⁴

Though I strongly defend the right and freedom of people to apply the teachings of their religion or worldview to the public square, I also strongly defend separation of church and state, a stance typical of the Kuyper tradition. This stance also excludes the privileged status for secularism as is currently the case in countries like Canada, for secularism is simply one faith-based worldview among others. Secular privilege is as dangerous to freedom as is Catholic or Muslim privilege.

As Spykman explains the distinction, the church as institute represents the “inner circle,” while the organism consists of the “larger outer circle of the church..., the body of believers” who are busy in the marketplace. He describes the relationship between them as “concentric circles” with the institute at the centre. This is the church “as worshipping community” with all the functions associated with the official church institution such as discipline, pastoral care, preaching, sacraments, etc. Failure to make this distinction during the Middle Ages led to the domineering stance of the Roman Catholic Church, where the clergy ruled everything connected with the Christian religion, both inside and outside the church. The distinction was first made during the Reformation, but the “definitive formulation” came from Kuyper, according to Spykman. He insisted that this distinction is “inescapable.” Even if the entire church institute with its clergy, buildings and ministries and networking organizations were to be destroyed, the Church of Christ as organism would continue to exist as a living community in the working world. Basically, the Church is people in their relationships and vocations in God’s world. *That’s the real Church.* The institute exists as a means to an end, the end being the health of the organism. Spykman quotes Hendrikus Berkhof, a Dutch theologian, who put it thus: *The institute “is the foundation and root” of the organism or community of Christians in the world; the organism “is the purpose and fruit” of the institute.* “That church is truest to its calling which best prepares the Church for living the kingdom life in the midst of the world.” The institute nourishes the life of the believer and is thus very important, but the life of the believer in society is not ecclesiastical but “worldly” in nature.²⁵ As James McGoldrick, an American Kuyperian scholar, summarized Kuyper, “...all of life is religious, but not all of life is ecclesiastical.”²⁶ Geerhardus Vos represented the Kuyperian perspective on the Princeton Seminary faculty for almost four decades. Mouw wrote,

He echoed Kuyper's worries about the dangers of undue ecclesiastical influence over Christian activity in the other spheres. The goals of God's Kingdom are not served, Vos warned, "by making human life in all its spheres subject to the visible church [institute]." We must "separate between the visible church [institute] and such things as the Christian state, Christian art, Christian science, etc. [organism]." These various modes of interaction can flourish, Vos insisted, only if they stand, not under, but along side of the visible church [institute], drawing—just as the visible church [institute] must also do—directly from "the regenerated life of the invisible church [organism]." ²⁷

So, when talking about the relationship of religion to the state, we have to consider two sets of relationships, namely that of church/mosque as institute vis a vis the state and, secondly, that of the body of believers in general vis a vis the state and politics.²⁸ *I urge Christians and Muslims to read the materials referred to in the above endnote and learn to uphold that distinction in the course of the ongoing negotiations and dialogue events.* Almost all writers confuse these two sets of relationships. Even an outstanding scholar like Lamin Sanneh does not clearly distinguish them so that one is often left in a kind of limbo, not knowing just which is which in any given discussion. Additional confusion sets in because he thinks of religion as a separate realm among other areas of culture and puts his entire discussion in that one basket.

The question of church/mosque and state has to do with both aspects of religion—with the religions as institutes along with their organizations probably best described as "ecclesiastical," but also with religion as a force in the life of the people, the organism. Religion as a social force and power is represented by individual adherents of the two religions as well as by non-ecclesiastical reli-

gious institutions and organizations. Nigeria has numerous Christian and Muslim professional associations of dentists and medical people, of nurses, teachers and journalists. These are religious but not ecclesiastical, though some Catholic versions may well be under the supervision of bishops. These organizations are well known in Nigeria. Even political parties can be based on a single religion or they can be joint efforts of two or more religions. In addition to these religious organizations, individual Christians and Muslims have their faith, around which they build their lives wherever they are, including government and politics. This is the religion that underlies individual lives and cultures. The religions as institute, as church and mosque organizations, constitute one of the cultural sectors existing along other sectors in society. So, there is a whole religious but non-ecclesiastical life out there, the organism, where people practise their religion that cannot be said to constitute a separate realm alongside other cultural areas but that undergirds and infuses all cultural realms. By not observing this distinction between institute and organism, many writers, including Sanneh, cause confusion, while it leads some denominations to practise religious domination over Christians in the marketplace. My religion, but not my church, is to infuse all of my life in all of its aspects. Yes to religion and politics. Yes to religion and government. Yes to religion and business. Yes to religion and.... That is what religion as organism is primarily all about. The institute or ecclesiastical side of it has been badly inflated and given us such a skewed idea of religion that we think of it as primary. Where that view has taken hold I talk of "churchified" Christianity and "mosquefied" Islam. The really serious stuff plays itself out in the marketplace as organism, not in the church or mosque as institute. Calling the marketplace, the focus and locus of the church as organism, "secular" and playing with concepts such as "neutrality" and "objectivity," for most Christians arises out of secularism rather than the Christian faith.

Perhaps the above discussion strikes you as too theoretical. Well, we are talking about making shifts in our paradigms, remember? The introduction of the institute/organism distinction is such a paradigm shift, the practical importance of which you will understand better when reading the next chapter, where it will be applied to government and politics. There you will see that the distinction is very important in a practical way.

▲ THE HUMAN MISSION -----

The purpose of this section is to help you understand the human task on earth and its importance from the Kuyperian perspective. As to the Muslim view, I point you especially to the section “*Da’wah*” and to the Ibrahim Sulaiman inset, both in Appendix 6. As you would expect from Sulaiman, his programme is fully wholistic and covers the entire culture. In contrast to him, too many Christians think that working in the world is of secondary importance to God. They think that His preference is for us to work in the church and do “religious” work. The reading required to answer the questions below will hopefully teach you something of the great importance of ordinary work in the ordinary world on the part of the religions as organisms. That is where the rubber of the human mission, both Christian and Muslim, hits the road. Muslims know this; due to their dualistic heritage, Christians are often not so sure. If we Christians want to work with Muslims to make our nation a viable enterprise, we need to better understand the teaching of the Bible about the importance before God of working in this world, of the task of the Church as organism. Here there is need for a serious paradigm shift in our understanding of ourselves, our mission and our world. Muslim wholism and false Christian dualism do not make easy bedfellows. Wholistic Christians will understand Muslims better and both can co-operate with each other more comfortably without either giving up their core beliefs.

Still on Sulaiman in Appendix 6, I draw your attention to yet another parallel between the spirit of Kuyperianism and Islam. Note the robust spirit in which Sulaiman challenges his faith mates to break the shackles with which secular colonial history has bound them and to remake Nigerian history. Leaning on Groen van Prinsterer, the main spiritual forebear to Abraham Kuyper, James Skillen challenged “Christians to see themselves as people called by God to *make* history according to His will.... Only with such an attitude would Christianity really live.” Just like Sulaiman’s call to his people, this was a call to break *their* shackles with which 19th-century secularism had bound them and remake *their* history. A similar call to overcome the same enemy but in very different cultures. Kuyper c.s. were the clipper to break that chain with repercussions that reach all the way across Canada to its far west coast, where some of my humanist friends are still talking about it in the 21st century but without knowing its background history. And just like Sulaiman, Skillen asserted, “With this issue of human responsibility for shaping history, we confront one of the most important challenges of modernity.”²⁹

I am challenging Nigerian Christians and Muslims to hear these calls from prophetic voices within their religions and remake or redirect Nigeria’s future history together.

For both religions, the human mission includes outreach. This outreach is not nullified by pluralism. Christianity, Islam and secularism have occasionally been successful in overcoming one another. Examples are the current temporary secular victory in Europe; the Muslim victory in the East and in North Africa; the Christian repossession of Andelusia/Spain and Austria. Christianity and Islam have both won over large Animistic populations. Prohibiting this missionary impulse in effect is to prohibit them from being themselves,

the very opposite of pluralism. In a genuine pluralistic regime, if a particular religion or worldview overcomes another by missionary persuasion or simply because its adherents have lost faith in it, no government will stop this change. Where governments do resist this process, you can be sure they are not practicing pluralism. Essentially, pluralism spells *laissez faire* worldview or religion.

Only if this outreach ignores all boundaries of civility, honesty and decency, some rules need to be set. It is best that these rules are set by each contending worldview community or, in multi-religious fashion, together by representatives from each, but not by government, unless chaos has ensued.

Both religions are missionary to the core. Due to the reductionist influence of secularism, most Christian missions have reduced their goals to largely fit within the scope allowed by secularism. But Islam is not likely to undergo such a reduction of its goals. Among those goals is gaining control over the power structures of the nation and twist them to their ends. That is *mainline* Islam. Ibrahim Sulaiman predicts that “Islam will once again, God willing, play a decisive role in directing the destiny of all its people. This fact must be taken into account by all those concerned with the...future of Nigeria.”³⁰ Indeed, as it must be taken into account by those who will be responsible to negotiate a Christian-Muslim peace in Nigeria.

Both Kuyperian Christians and Islam have quite clear views on the human task on earth, including striking similarities and parallels. The Study Guide below emphasizes mostly the Christian view. The Muslim perspective can largely be summed up by the terms “*khalifa*” or “vicegerent” and “*da’wah*.” These have been treated at various points throughout this series.³¹ I give you the following explanation from Abul Mawdudi³² as a reminder. He wrote, “*Khilafa* means ‘representation.’ Man...is the representative of God on earth, His vice-gerent. That is to say, by virtue of the powers delegated to him by God, and within the limits prescribed,

he is required to exercise divine authority.” He compares this position to that of an estate administrator. It is also interesting that he discusses the notion in a chapter on the political framework of Islam. The ruler, the caliph, runs his domain as a caliphate under the sovereignty of God.³³ Note how it is basically impossible in Islam to discuss religion without getting involved immediately in politics. I want you to realize that this is by no means a marginal idea in either of the religions. Even the 2008 OIC Declaration on Human Rights refers to it as a basis for human rights. It states, “The Conference, by recalling the prominent place of Man in Islam as Allah’s vicegerent on earth and hence the paramount importance attached by Muslim thought to the promotion of human rights....” [Par. 112].³⁴

The issue of Muslim plans for taking over Nigeria is part of *da’wah* and has been discussed at various points in earlier volumes. Christians insist there is such a plan. Sookhdeo’s book of 2008 is saturated with it. Muslims mostly deny it. For academics, of course, at least Western academics, it is politically incorrect, not to say *verboten*, to affirm such a plan. It smacks of sinister intrigue and of conspiracy theories that no self-respecting academic would engage in. But let’s widen the scope for a minute to a plan for the West as a whole. What do you say to this comment by former Algerian President Houari Boumedienne to the UN back in 1974? “One day millions of men will leave the southern hemisphere...to burst into the northern one. But not as friends. Because they will burst in to conquer, and they will conquer by populating it with their children. Victory will come to us from the wombs of our women.” Or to the more recent one by Colonel Qaddafi in 2006: “We have 50 million Muslims in Europe. There are signs that Allah will grant Islam victory in Europe—without swords, without guns, without conquests. The 50 million Muslims of Europe will turn it into a Muslim continent within a few decades.” And then you have Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a prominent Sunni cleric, who put it clearly:

“Islam entered Europe twice and left it.... Perhaps the next conquest, Allah willing, will be by means of preaching and ideology. The conquest need not necessarily be by the sword.... [The conquest of Mecca] was not by the sword or by war but by a treaty and by peace.... Perhaps we will conquer these lands without armies. We want an army of preachers and teachers who will present Islam in all languages and in all dialects....”³⁵ There seems little doubt as to the aims of Islam’s missiologists, its strategists. It is inherent to Islam and can be seen as an expression and working out of the doctrine of *hijra* [migration]. I find no fault with this drive. Given the classic doctrine of *hijra*, it is a legitimate and wise use of Western governmental blind secular policies. As a Kuyperian Christian missionary I perfectly understand that urge to expand and, in fact, admire their energy in carrying it out in their relentless fashion.³⁶ While today we Christian missionaries concoct our little local five-year micro-plans, Muslim strategists have their global plans and work at them energetically. It could not be otherwise; it is inherent in the very depth of Islam. Again, notice the easy merger of religious and political concerns. Mission becomes a political weapon of conquest.

That being the case, do not for a moment doubt the existence of Muslim plans for Nigeria. It can hardly do otherwise; it would constitute nothing short of betrayal of Islam. Not every individual Muslim will have this as her personal goal, but it surely is and must be the goal of every Muslim missiologist, including Nigerians. Ibrahim Sulaiman is the perfect example. Christians need to counteract these plans by preparing their own strategic national plan that is equally wholistic in scope and that fits within the scope of pluralism and within the framework of the political formula that I develop and propose during the course of succeeding chapters.

Ibrahim Sulaiman is a powerful Muslim writer and, I suspect, orator. Like Kuyper, a first-rate orator,³⁷ Sulaiman addresses his fellow Muslims with great vigour and encourages them in the most robust of language. Please turn to the Sulaiman inset towards the end of Appendix 6 and savour his quotations—powerful, visionary, robust, hopeful. He does everything he can to arouse his people from their secular slumber and put the original comprehensive Islam back on track not only but in the saddle of the nation. He is all for a certain degree of respect for other religions, but his energetic calls for a revivalist type of *da'wah* trump it all.

Christians have many great orators as well in Nigeria. I have often marveled at their natural oratorical skills. However, too often they offer a truncated, dualistic form of the gospel and thus a gospel of little power that can hardly match the wholistic calls from the Sulaimans of Nigeria.

Nigeria's Christian training institutions need to get out of their academic molds and train their gifted preachers and other speakers for powerful and wholistic presentations of the gospel in both writing and speaking. A person may be born with such gifts, but academic institutions can squash these gifts or they can enhance them. Christians need an intentional programme of training such men and women. And not only theologians or preachers. Oratorically gifted and wholistic leaders need to be developed at every front to present a version of the gospel relevant to their particular occupational niche. The training should probably include debating skills.

Assuming you have done the homework I gave you above, I hope you noticed various parallels and similarities between Kuyperian and Muslim perspectives.

Study Guide 7 — The Human Mission in the World (Appendix 105)

▲ IMAGE OF GOD

This section on the image of God can be considered a special insert. This concept is one difficult to swallow for Muslims and every Muslim referral to it comes out wrong. It is one of these Christians teachings they have been inoculated against since childhood and will not be corrected. So, I am going to quote from a respectable Muslim scholar's explanation of *Al-Baqarah* (Qur'an 2:165 "The Cow"). Writing about the "Nature of True Imam and Love for Allah," the British Khurram Murad wrote, "This love makes us do our duty to Allah, as His representatives, while we are out in the street, at home or in the office. With this love, we live as servants of Allah, everywhere willingly making every sacrifice required of us. In fact, it propels us to share actively in the service of Allah's other creatures. True love of Allah makes one care for people and their needs."³⁸ *That is one of the best descriptions of the image of God I have ever seen. As we live that life, we reflect God, we image Him. When people observe this life in us, it makes them think of God. When we act like Him, we reflect Him, we remind people of Him. Thank you, Ustaz Murad, for that great description. You may not agree with the term, but you surely believe in its substance: the reality of God's image in His people— and so, obviously, does Young Muslims Canada who passed this on.*

▲ RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CLERGY

Religious leaders in Nigeria, at both institute and organism fronts, have a heavy responsibility in Christian-Muslim relations, which is to say, in almost all Nigerian affairs at every level. A BBC survey has uncovered some important data about religion in Africa in general and in Nigeria in particular. These are: (1) Religious leaders are trusted by some 85% of the people, possibly higher than anywhere in the world; (2) Religious leaders are said to influ-

ence the decision-making of a high percentage; (3) The majority of the people stated that religion is the most important factor in defining themselves. Religion *uber alles!*³⁹ Not everyone thinks that highly of their religious leaders. Haruna Yakubu is a former Islamic militant who went to work as youth co-ordinator for the Interfaith Mediation Centre operated by James Wuye and Muhammad Ashafa, whom you may have met earlier in major Appendix-chapter 1 and 6. He said to Eliza Griswold, “Our religious leaders are some of our most dangerous people,” a statement he backed up by describing how they arouse the people to violence.⁴⁰

The above elevated position of religious leaders being what it is, they owe it to their followers to serve and lead them responsibly in the process of reconciling the two religions towards a peaceful *modus vivendi*—and note the order: service must shape leadership. *The people and the country therefore need leaders who are aware of their potential influence and who wage that influence wisely according to the core spirit of their religion. They must be “born again” leaders, that is to say, they must have appropriated the core spirit of their religion and resist the worldly temptations of power and wealth. Leaders must cease suppressing or quenching the Spirit of God or “put out the Spirit’s fire,”⁴¹ the only Force that can overcome the forces of ethnicity and personal ambition.*

If no one supports the people in this matter, they should take matters in their own hands and replace these religious leaders. Each religious organization will be more stable if they have a protocol in place to replace their ineffective leaders without undue obstacles to prevent matters going from bad to worse. No one rejected by his own people has the right to lead; leadership is not private property or a right, only a privilege and obligation to serve. There is no room in religious organizations for power, ambition, hate or anger trips.

If the religious organization is not able or willing to discipline or replace religious leaders that stir up hatred, anger and violence, a government security agency must be empowered to rein them in. Though normally the theory of sphere sovereignty would keep such agencies out of religious organizations, when these no longer operate properly and cause social problems, then it is the proper role of Government to step in and restore order. That should not be condemned by the organization or its members as undue interference, but be appreciated as a proper handling by Government of security breaches. Such leaders have abdicated the responsibility with which the people have entrusted them.

▲ FUNDAMENTALISM AND ISLAM —————

The question is whether Muslim Fundamentalism is actually representative of orthodox or classical Islam. Note that I do not use the term “traditional,” for what passes for traditional Islam in the core North is so interwoven with ancient non-Islamic accretions that the term simply does not carry adequate weight. The question is whether Fundamentalism or its synonyms such as “militants,” “extremists” and “radicals” can pass the orthodoxy test. Quite a few scholars of Islam, whether Muslim, Christian or secularist, answer the question negatively. Apart from Lamin Sanneh, an ex-Muslim, I will adduce here exclusively the opinions of moderate Muslim scholars.

These opinions are important in the Nigerian context. The militant all too often pose as representatives of the real thing—of the Prophet himself, of ancient traditions, of the true sharia— but this meets with serious challenge. Fundamentalists should know that theirs is not always true to the fundamentals. It is also good for moderate Muslims to be reminded of and be encouraged by the opinions of these moderate scholars, those who have the knowledge and insight to pull the rug from under the false and militant pre-

tenses of Fundamentalists. They may be fearful of the threats that come when one disavows militancy, but awareness of the more ancient track can give them the motivation and courage to rescue Islam from the hands of Fundamentalism. *It is also good for Christians to realize that, in addition to secularism, militant Fundamentalism is their main political enemy way before mainstream Islam.* This will give them the tools to encourage moderate Muslims to stand up and be counted, to point them to more legitimate alternatives within their own history.

This is not to suggest that once Fundamentalists are out of the way, then relations between the two religions will become easy. By no means. There remain fundamental differences in their world-views, their theologies and their practices that will never disappear. *It remains to be seen whether the two religions in their moderate forms can actually live together in peace as equal partners in Nigeria over the long run. Definitely not without tension.* For example, if neither party is prepared to moderate aspects of their views on the relationship of religion to government, especially of church/mosque to state, the future becomes questionable. Nevertheless, awareness that that relationship has not always been as tight in Muslim history, as most contemporary Muslims seem to assume, may help them develop a more open attitude. At the same time, if Christians can distance themselves from their inheritance of semi-secular dualism, they may be able to meet Muslims halfway in a compromise with which both can live.

However, even moderate Islam may not pull us out of the woods altogether, since both religions are missionary religions and retain their vitality through expansion. I have already described that problem earlier in the chapter. I am not in a position to argue what is orthodox Islam and what is not. I am only pointing out that a more orthodox and moderate attitude gives us a greater chance for better relations in Nigeria than does militancy. I will simply identify and quote a few serious Muslim scholars to make

my point. Throughout much of this Part 2 I treat the thoughts of the modern Yale scholar Lamin Sanneh, but you must realize that he depends a great deal on the ancient Muslim scholar Ibn Khaldun, whose theories are “transfused throughout” Sanneh’s 1997 publication.⁴² Khaldun favoured a more distant relationship between mosque/church and state and felt that the type of tight arrangements pushed by today’s militants are dangerous to both state and religion and will, in fact, turn both of them into oppressors. That attitude is a far cry from the Fundamentalist Muslim demands Christians today are rejecting.

Below follow a few quotations from Muslim scholars in an anthology edited by Joseph E. B. Lumbard. This is a bundle of essays by *Western* Muslims whose scholarship comes with the highest recommendation of one of the deans of today’s Muslim scholarship, Seyyed Hossein Nasr of George Washington University. He described Lumbard’s book as “one of the most significant, timely and fresh Muslim responses” to 9/11 and considers it “an important step in bringing the deeper resources of the Islamic tradition...to present the authentic teachings of Islam to the West.” The modern Muslim authors of this anthology “are deeply rooted in the Islamic intellectual tradition....”

Abdallah Schleifer of the American University in Cairo:

This book is of critical importance in clearing away the confusion and media-induced misconception that fundamentalist—be they contemporary Wahhabis or violent extremists who have hijacked the word “jihad”—represent... orthodox Islam. They do not now and never have....

Alvin Moore, Jr.:

Significant numbers of Muslims...see modernity, globalization, and the preponderance of the West as gravely threatening to their culture and tradition, and in this respect their per-

ceptions are correct. Some of them believe they are defenders of God's works but, like their Western confreres, they lack profound understanding not only of human nature but also of their own tradition. Both sides operate from false premises and are driven by ignorance and a "zeal not according to knowledge."

Lumbarb himself wrote that Fundamentalism represents

a complete break with traditional Islamic teachings—not a conscious development from them or of them. Of all the possible "Islams" one could choose from, these are the least representative of its traditional teachings and classical heritage, for they have no scriptural, historical or intellectual foundations. As such, they cannot provide sustainable solutions for Muslim people....⁴³

And another Lumbarbism:

Were the teachings of Islam to be followed and a true Islamic revival to take place, militant extremists would no longer have an audience. ...it is this very pressure to secularize which has produced the narrow interpretations characteristic of modern fundamentalism.⁴⁴

The writers in Lumbarb's anthology repeat this disjunction between orthodoxy and militancy time and again. In fact, it is a major theme of the collection. I support Nasr's high recommendation of this book. For any serious student of these issues, it is an absolute *must*.⁴⁵

Every Nigerian leader in the movement towards reconciliation, whether Christian or Muslim, must become familiar with this discussion and thus be equipped to clearly distinguish orthodox moderate Islam from the fundamentalist militant varieties of today—and firmly refuse to deal with the latter. Especially for moderate Muslims, that will require courage.

▲ IJTIHAD: QUR’ANIC INTERPRETATION —————

The Muslim community, at least the scholars among them, is divided on the question of Qur’anic interpretation. It has received attention in earlier volumes and chapters,⁴⁶ but here I frankly drop objectivity and openly take sides with Muhammad Asad, Sanusi L. Sanusi and their likes. They advocate an interpretation of both the Qur’an and sharia that is dynamic instead of the literalist interpretation employed by fundamentalists, militants, Islamists and Taliban types. Muhammad Asad wrote that the problem with conservative Muslims is that they “insist on the maintenance of all traditional forms” that are based “not so much on the real values of Islam as on the social conventions evolved in the centuries of our decadence.” They hold the “assumptions that Islam and the conventions of Muslim society are one and the same thing.” And again, we end up with a call by many Muslims for an end to all vestiges of secular colonialism and replacing them with customs and culture that are found in sharia. The controversial question is, once again, what is the real sharia.⁴⁷

As in the development of the Bible, these more liberal interpreters recognize the interplay of the divine and human factors in Qur’an and sharia, the historical contextual factors. They consider the intention of a given passage within its own historical context and then, with input from other passages and classical literature, determine the meaning of the passage for today. It liberates them from the burdens of literally applying passages of violence to our current situation. Theirs, they insist, is not a modernist invention but represents the traditional Muslim interpretative tool of “*ijtihad*.” Ali Ahmad of BUK advised the Muslim community to revive this ancient tool he described as certain technical kinds of traditional judgements that will free them from faulty legalistic judgements. If they cannot do so, they have no business running a sharia show.⁴⁸

I favour this interpretative tradition partially because that is somewhat similar to how I have been taught to study my own Holy Book, the Bible. Another and perhaps stronger reason is that the more literalist method of interpretation is associated with the militant version of Islam and, in fact, with militancy and violence themselves. Former Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, in 2001 lectures delivered in New York, “condemned any religious justification for terrorism” and rebuked “vicious terrorists who concoct weapons out of religions,” calling them “superficial literalists clinging to the most simplistic ideas.” He declared them “utterly incapable of understanding that, perhaps inadvertently, they are turning religion into the handmaiden of the most decadent ideologies.” As to the Taliban, he critiqued them for their “gross distortion of Islam.”⁴⁹

We have already met Joseph Lombard and his fellow authors who strongly deny the Islamic legitimacy of fundamentalism and militancy. Along with that stance comes the rejection of the literalist interpretation of the Qur’an. David Dakake, an American Muslim, presents us with examples of contextual reading of the Qur’anic statements about *jihad*. It is obvious that a literal reading leads not only to misinterpretation but to *highly dangerous misinterpretation* in the area of Christian-Muslim relations. It is also clear from the Dakake article that understanding the Qur’an by means of studying ancient commentaries requires deep knowledge of language and ancient culture that goes far beyond the understanding of the average Muslim. His conclusion with respect to militants and terrorists is that they “followed their own imaginings about ‘religion’ without any serious understanding of the traditional sources of the Islamic faith.” Nowhere in the Qur’an, the life of the Prophet or ancient authoritative commentaries can you find any justification for their deeds.⁵⁰

It should be understood that Lombard c.s. are not simply modernists who have drunk deeply from the well of modernism as

have so many secular Muslims. They distinguish themselves from these secular modernists and seem to prefer calling themselves “traditionalists.” In contemporary Islam we have thus three schools: literalists, modernists and traditionalists. You find “both dogmatic literalists and modern ‘liberal’ secularists with a thin veneer of Islamic terms and sayings, while the voice of traditional Islamic thought is often muted and ignored.”⁵¹

In the Nigerian context where the term “tradition” is applied to a folk Islam with many accretions, I prefer to use the term “orthodox” to describe the stance of Lumbard c.s.

I also refer you back to Abdulsalam Ajetunmobi, who was hopeful that Muslims will in due time recognize the human basis of sharia along with its gradual development. “...our understanding of it must be compatible with and affected by the knowledge of our time, and that it is there that we will find healing answers to our problems.” I fully back his view with respect to these developments without accepting his optimistic expectations of secularism.⁵²

I also refer you back to the Christian student of Islam, Okezie Chukwumerije in San Francisco. He strongly urged Nigerian Muslims to copy Muslims in other countries where they have taken to a more liberal interpretation and thus have opened themselves up to the modern world. Muslims have to choose between “the opening of the mind to new ideas and new ways of looking at the world” that “is not inherently incompatible with the practice of faith” and “the deliberate closing of the mind” that “is patently incompatible with human progress.”⁵³

And then we have Farzana Hassan, President of the Muslim Canadian Congress (MCC), who upon her ascension to the throne, wrote

With my new role as President of the MCC, I hope to impress upon my co-religionists that tolerance, open-mindedness and

*sincerity of purpose are needed in areas where conservative Islam has fallen short of modern standards. I also urge Muslims to acknowledge the principle of progress demonstrated behind each injunction of the Quran. The changes Islam introduced incorporated the advancement of civilization as an underlying principle, whether it was giving inheritance rights to women or improving the conditions of slaves. It is this principle of progress that must be upheld at all times as an agent of change, not its specific seventh century applications, for it is only this recognition that will result in the betterment of Muslims as a religious community and humankind as a whole.*⁵⁴

“The principle of progress”—that sounds suspiciously like the term “progressive revelation” in the Christian context! Well spoken Ms. President!

Nina Shea was Director of the Center for Religious Freedom within Washington-based Freedom House, an organization that has done a lot of sharia research and publication. She wrote that it is the Islamist “core premise” that sharia is a purely divine given without any human input that constitutes the core conflict. “It is this failure to recognize the human agency in the interpretation and application of sharia, placing the sharia system, its laws and judgements, beyond the realm of debate, criticism and accountability—that is so problematic for freedom. This premise has made coercion and repression necessary conditions of government....”⁵⁵

At this point I wish to pause briefly around the subject of Muslim interpretation of Christianity and express my annoyance at the Muslim steadfast insistence that they know the Bible and Christianity better than do Christians. Muslims, what do you think when Christians interpret *your* idea of *jihad* or *azumi* [fasting] or some other Muslim teaching or practice? In most cases you do not recognize yourself in the Christian interpretation, for there is usu-

ally some misinterpretation involved. You should know that when you interpret Christian doctrines—for example the Trinity—, we Christians do not recognize ourselves either. Your interpretation is usually off the mark if not dead wrong. But you will not even allow Christians to correct your version of Christianity. You know Christianity better than Christians do! No matter how often Christians try to correct you, no matter how many tomes and tomes Christian theologians produce or how many official statements are published by Christian authoritative sources, you will not budge. It all falls on deaf ears and closed minds. You know better, period!

This paragraph is written almost a year after the above expression of puzzlement and annoyance. Since then it has dawned on me why you refuse to budge. There are two reasons. The first is that some of your stubborn misinterpretations of Christianity have their roots in the origins of Islam. For reasons I cannot take time to explain here, these misinterpretations crept into early Islam and have ever since been the standard authorized Islamic—in distinction from Muslim—interpretations. They are part of Islamic orthodoxy and thus not open to revision, no matter how effectively disputed by Christian authorities. The second reason is your *literalist interpretation of the Qur'an* about anything to do with Christianity, including the Bible and its content.

Bert Witvoet reports on Canadian Muslim writer Raheel Raza, who wrote that “there are two Islams practiced today—one the Islam of the Prophet Muhammad, the Islam of peace and forgiveness and spirit, women’s rights and equality. The other Islam is the militant, extremist, fanatic cult of those who misappropriate religious teachings to justify murder, inflict destruction ...in the name of sharia, subjugate and suppress minorities and women to promote injustice.”⁵⁶ The two approaches to the Qur’an discussed in earlier paragraphs constitute the fault line between these two Islams.

So, there, all these different people from different backgrounds

and faiths, pushing for a more liberal interpretation of both the Qur'an and sharia. Given all that, along with discussions in earlier volumes and chapters, I am strongly urging the mainstream Muslim community to actively and strongly promote the more dynamic approach to sharia as the only viable avenue to peace. My prayer is that Alan Wolfe's observation that the Nigerian mainstream Muslim community is turning increasingly towards fundamentalism⁵⁷ may prove wrong and that, in fact, the opposite will turn out to be the case.

*Moderate Muslims have a huge challenge before them. They need to convince us which Islam they belong to and support. This cannot be done by words only but requires deeds demonstrating their words. As to those claiming to represent the peaceful Prophet, Christians had better be ready to support them instead of fighting them. Appendix 35 along with the succeeding appendices provide plenty of suggestions as to the how of this Christian support. The end of this chapter, this place right here and now, would be a good time for moderate Muslims to begin developing a strategy to halt the current direction. Christians also can begin to discuss it amongst themselves not only, but also approach moderate Muslims on how they can stop the trend **together**.*

