

MY ENDORSEMENT OF WIEBE BOER'S BID FOR

MEMBERSHIP IN THE ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIANS ABROAD (ANA)

John Boer and his wife, Frances Ann, arrived in Nigeria in 1966 as missionaries under the joint sponsorship of the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the Sudan United Mission, and have lived there since then except for the period when John pursued his doctorate degree in the Netherlands. Initially, he lived in Wukari, Gongola state (now Taraba state). In the course of his work, John learned to speak and write Hausa fluently. Indeed, giving all allowances for overstatement and wrong analogy, I can compare John Boer's proficiency in Hausa with....¹

I am not current with the figures now, but I think this John Boer has published at least six books in Hausa, most of them of small compass. And if I get it right, his target readers have been the grassroots – his theme being the spiritual and economic forces that dehumanize people, forces which its victims think they can do nothing about simply due to their ideological-spiritual captivity.

Based on his experience in Nigeria, John Boer researched and published his doctoral dissertation under the title, *Missionary Messengers of Liberation in a Colonial Context: A Case Study of the Sudan United Mission.*² At the risk of oversimplification and distortion, Boer's contention is that Biblical Christianity and capitalism/colonialism are opposites, whereas many bearers of the gospel have not always made the distinction in word and deed. Of course, he did not ignore the seven areas of friction between Christian missionaries in the Northern region and officers of the unjust Anglo-Fulani pact and conspiracy against the Nigerian population.

If you ask me what I think of John's attitude/stance, I will tell you that it takes a lot of guts and risks for one to criticize a movement of which one is a part.

¹Awoniyi engages in some exaggeration here that should not be published.

²This and most other Boer publications referred to in this document can be found at < www.SocialTheology.com/boeriana >, while his writings on Islam are found at < www.SocialTheology.com/islamica >.

Some doctoral dissertations are notoriously long. Even in standard published form, John's goes beyond the 500 pages. Happily, there is a short version of it, *Missions: Heralds of Capitalism or Christ?* published by Daystar Press Ibadan (1984). If you can manage only a summary, it is contained in an article John wrote, "The Politico-Colonial Context of Missions in Northern Nigeria" in *Calvin Theological Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 1, April-November 1984, pp. 167-191. This article gives a good insight into how John Boer's mind and heart work.

Since then, Boer has written several book(let)s, including *Christians and Mobilization* (1989). That was his personal and critical reflection on MAMSER, the programme that Babangida inaugurated/subverted. It originally was a lecture delivered at an event at the University of Ibadan and so would be of interest to academics.

Whatever we think of his earlier publications, two of the most recent ones are of particular relevance to Nigerians in diaspora. They are as follows: 1) John Boer, *Caught in the Middle: Christians in Transnational Corporations* (1992) and 2) John Boer (ed.) *The Church and the External Debt* (1992). This second book is particularly focused on Nigeria – and all but two of the contributors are Nigerians who may be said to be above board. The books have to do with the money which our people never saw or counted, which were spent on projects that you earmarked on radio but which you never eyemarked, for all of which your children and mine will be held contemptuously responsible to their generation to whom they would not have owed anything directly.

It will be helpful for all diasporans to at least browse through *The Church and the External Debt* to have a better insight, as well as in another article in *Today's Challenge*, No. 1, 1992. Boer was able to raise the question which many Nigerians were/are unable to articulate. He was suspicious of a hidden agenda in the reparation drive. He noted and gave evidence of its one-sidedness. He wanted to know why (and I think all diasporans should be aware henceforth) the demand for reparation should be directed at the West only and not at the Arabs, bearing in mind the FACT of Arab slave-marketing of Nigerians till the twentieth century. The implication of this to me is that if we are serious about the reparation question, Abiola should be able to confront the Arabs whom he has boasted as being his fellow Muslims with the same zest with which he has confronted the West.

If you are unable to get any of Boer's book(let)s or articles, I have a copy of the one in *Today's Challenge* magazine. I commend it to you. I do not have a fax facility. So I will have to send it to you by mail if you let me have your postal address.

The above writing is on behalf of John's son, Wiebe Boer's bid to join ANA. Based on the above, I move that the poor chap (as we say at home) should be welcome into ANA's fold. Furthermore, you as much as I do know that it is virtually impossible to get anything in Nigeria if you know nobody. It is not of much use to simply advise the poor chap to apply for a Nigerian passport. ANA should follow through his application. In other words, may I suggest that he apply using ANA's address and ANA stand by him as his next of kin?

God bless

Yours

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