

FAREWELL

This is a “Farewell!” rather than an impersonal “Conclusion.” Yes, I am going to get personal. Assuming you’ve traveled the entire road with me, you have been a good friend and a patient partner. I am grateful for your endurance and loyalty. I suspect the reason for it is your intense interest in the peace of Nigeria. I sincerely hope that this journey has helped you in that quest. There are few things I desire more than that peace. And now a few, somewhat random, parting words.

An important function of this series has been my attempt to have *Christians and main-stream Muslims understand each other’s problems and recognize how they oppress each other with their respective impositions*. The British *did* slip Muslims the secular poison pill. They *did* break their promise of non-interference on a massive scale. And Christians *have* vigorously defended secularism while denying the religious background of their Common Law. Both Christians and Muslims have good reasons for resisting a judiciary that is totally foreign to the people and wholly corrupt, twisted and derailed, the British system as much as the sharia. Hence,

Christians, can you not sympathize with the hopes and dreams of the exhausted Muslim *talakawa* who saw in the push for sharia a final chance for justice and development? They saw heaven's door opening on earth. Can you not *feel* something of the exhilaration of the burdens of oppression falling off their shoulders? They are suffering the same things you are. Unfortunately, till now most of these hopes have not been realized. And Muslims, after you have read Volumes 3, 5 and 7, have you begun to realize the degree of harassment and persecution you have inflicted on Christians? Do you still persist in your denial by saying, "Why, Muslims believe in peace. *Therefore* they don't do those things!?" It is time for all of us to get real.

There are a few other key concepts I want you to plant deep in your heart and mind. For Christians, it is the wholistic nature of religion in general and of Christianity in particular. I also want Muslims to note this Christian quality, even if they have not had a chance to observe it adequately. The second is that of pluralism, genuine, honest pluralism, full pluralism without hidden agendas. And then please keep in mind my proposed formula for Nigeria as it slowly developed in the course of the discussions:

*"Equality of status, access and rights; critical solidarity; independence; shura / consensus; complementarity; federalism."*¹

I once again confess that when I started to prepare for this series and especially this volume, I was not sure just where it would take me. Here I was with all those great Kuyperian perspectives of wholistic Christianity and all without lapsing into the relativism that often comes in the wake of pluralism and its fellow travelers of multi-religion and multiculturalism. It has been an exciting adventure for me as well as a breath-taking experiment. In a world where the dominant paradigms have long been shaped by secularism, it

takes some courage and, even more, mountains of imagination to develop an equation for a nation of Christians and Muslims that resolutely excludes the secular solution or even as component in a mix. To millions of people the secular solution is a “no-brainer.” Even a Christian theologian friend of mine who does not like secularism, was wondering what scheme I would come up with for Nigeria without a secular component. To be honest, I was not so sure myself. But I started collecting materials since the 1970s. I read, studied, researched and found rare and valuable pre-computer documents. I devoured Nigerian newspapers and magazines. I wrote and re-wrote, struggled and then struggled some more, throughout it all praying for inspiration, enlightenment and insight—for over a decade and a half. As various ideas unrolled themselves in my mind, I was sometimes stunned by my own conclusions and not infrequently ill at ease. What would my Nigerian friends say to my radical challenges?

I know some will reject them as coming from a white man who currently lives comfortably in Vancouver, who can afford the luxury of these dreams and who does not experience their pain to the same intensity. *True, but I am a missionary who spent thirty years of adult life in Nigeria. I have seen and heard the Name of Christ belittled by Muslims and trivialized by Christians with their dualism.* His *full* honour has not been proclaimed or demonstrated; our world and our country have not *fully* benefited from and enjoyed His salvation that begins in the here and now. *That hurts! That hurts intensely! All that still happening after 30 years of effort on my part and after a century or more of hundreds if not thousands of missionaries! Physically, that stirs my blood; spiritually, it riles my soul. Please do not belittle or cheapen my suffering.* And do not for one moment think that, after living thirty full and rich years among you, seeing your families killed and homes, businesses and houses of worship destroyed, does not affect me deeply. I get as enraged as you do. What do you think motivated me and my wife to spend

thousands of scarce dollars on this project without support from anyone or to devote a total of fifteen of our precious senior years to it? It is because we suffered from the hatred and bloodshed, from the persecution of our brothers and sisters. We could have spent those retirement years relaxing and enjoying the sunshine as so many of our fellow retirees do, year after year. This project is the product of suffering and even represents suffering itself. I will not allow you to get away with such a cheap shot. This series is too important for that. I want you to take it to heart and all of us, Christians and Muslims, repent of our violence, hatred, anger and oppressive impositions on each other.

So, here they are, these ideas, proposals and conclusions. This is what God has given me and this is what I pass on to you. I only ask that you consider these issues in the light of the Kuyperian perspective I have provided. I do not ask or expect that you will accept it all lock, stock and barrel. But this is your chance to familiarize yourself with a robust Christian perspective you have not heard much about before but that attracts an increasing number of people all over the world and provides them with deeper meaning. Only yesterday I received an email from an Evangelical who, upon becoming acquainted with this Kuyperian perspective, concluded he has been cheated out of a rich full-orbed Christian life until now.

If my exclusion of the secular perspective sounds intolerant to you and contradictory to the pluralism I profess, you probably have not read this series in its entirety. Even though I thoroughly disagree with secularism, I am not intolerant of secularists. Given the right circumstances, mainstream secularists have as much right at the table as anyone else and I would welcome them. However, in Nigeria they are so few that they do not count. *Secularism in Nigeria is not a community of its own; it exists mostly among Christians and Muslims as a parasite.* Most adherents of one type of secularism or another are either semi-secularized Christians or semi-secularized Muslims who adhere to some uneasy syncretistic

combination they have picked up during the course of their colonially-devised secular education. The major thesis of this book and series is that secularism is incompatible with both of these religions. These two factors, the negligible size of the secular community in Nigeria and its incompatibility with the two reigning religions, lead me to exclude it from the equation in Nigeria. I am after all talking mainly about the two religions. Both, to be true to each other, have to be true to themselves by cleansing themselves of the incompatible accretions of secularism. Of course, secularists have no valid reason to complain, for they themselves try to exclude “people of faith” from the public square. And they get away with it in countries like Canada, because their parasitic impact on the Christian community has largely succeeded.

I have not covered all issues in this book and have left many questions unanswered. In some cases I have presented you with alternatives and left the choice up to you. I even have consciously left you with some contradictions of issues that can be sorted out only by the community, not by a lone writer at his computer. But I do believe I have presented you with enough discussions of vision, principles, theories and practical issues that in their totality could change your entire outlook on Christian-Muslim relations not only but also flow over into other areas of your life. Of course, the discussions in this book are backed up with your own visions, principles, theories and practical issues in the seven preceding volumes. Mine did not just fall out of thin air; they are based on the concerns and ideas you, my Nigerian friends, have expressed. I am glad I had the opportunity to serve as the conduit of your ideas to succeeding generations, to all of Nigeria and beyond. Put in that context, I do not believe that my own final words in the form of this one volume are too long. I have practiced considerable restraint by leaving you to talk it out in the first seven volumes!

One topic I have not broached overtly at all in this Part 2 is that of dialogue. Normally a series of this kind ends up with a long

chapter on the subject. For one thing, there is plenty to be found on the subject in major chapter-Appendices 6 and 35 of Part 1 and some supporting appendices that are dedicated to the subject.² In addition, there are references and examples scattered throughout the series. Actually, this entire project can be seen as a push towards dialogue.

“Islam: Friend or Foe?” is the title of an article by my friend Harry Antonides. In his Canadian context, it may be a legitimate question, but in Nigeria we cannot afford to think in such stark terms. Here, it *must* be “Muslims: My Neighbours” or “Christians: My Neighbours.” We are both here in the millions and have no choice but to regard each other as neighbours. And neighbours have no choice but to find a *modus vivendi*, a way of living together, not of conquering or killing each other.³ I believe all of us know the oft-repeated Biblical injunction, “Love your neighbour as yourself.”⁴ In Nigeria, we Christians and Muslims are neighbours. Punkt! We cannot get around that.

I close this chapter, book and series with the same few words from the New Testament Bible with which I began in this book: “Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 2:23-25).

Farewell, my reader-friend. May your reading of this series prompt you to become an apostle of wholistic and pluralistic peace and dialogue. Then I will have achieved my purposes.

Alhamdu lillabi! Halleluiah! Praise the Lord!