

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

This volume's theme 'Religion and State Relations' can be understood broadly against the backdrop of an ambivalence towards religions, on one hand, and the renewed interest in religions as valuable in the modern state, on the other. Specifically, the theme makes sense in view of Nigeria's struggle against religion-inspired violence and religious fundamentalist groups. Surely, this demands re-examining the tensions between the state and religious beliefs and systems. Religious fundamentalist groups have three things in common. One, they accept no compromise with liberal values and secular institutions accepted by mainstream religious leaders and organisations. Two, they refuse to accept boundaries imposed around religions by the secular state. Three, they seek to replace weak modern substitutes of religion with a more vibrant and demanding forms of religion which they claim were there from the beginning of their respective religious traditions.¹ This insight can be distilled from *Boko Haram*'s convoluted rhetoric on YouTube and interviews on BBC Hausa service. This point comes out strongly in Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama's article that discusses how Christians live their Christian faith especially in Northern Nigeria in the face of *Boko Haram*'s terrorism.

The articles in this volume have one thing in common even if there are slight differences in the accents and emphases on the subject. They, without mentioning it explicitly, contest the secularisation process in Europe and its dogmatic myth of strict privatisation of religion. This myth has tried to deny or downgrade religion's importance and role in the modern state.

Most Revd Kaigama's contribution is the text of a public lecture delivered at the annual Theological Conference of the National Association of Catholic Theology Students, the National Missionary Seminary of St Paul, Gwagwalada Abuja Chapter on May 25, 2013. He argues that people reeling under religious terrorism can

1. Mark Jurgensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (California, CA: California University Press, 2003), 221.

blunt this terrorism by embracing pro-active interfaith dialogue. He mentions various interfaith initiatives across Nigeria to buttress his point.

Cletus Obijiaku recognises the tensions between religion and political institutions. The tensions centre round the extent or limit of religion in a 'secular' political entity (monarchy or state). These tensions, Obijiaku argues, is not a modern one as contemporary scholars of religion and the secularisation process want us to believe. On the contrary, the Bible has a lot to tell us about these tensions. His article ends by proposing, from a biblical-theological perspective, some ways of reducing the tensions between religion and state.

While Obijiaku takes a biblical-theological look at the relationship between the state and religion, Marco Moerschbacher, of the Institute of Missiology, Aachen, Germany, takes a historico-theological look at the same, using as his analytic case study the relationship between the Belgian state and the Catholic Church in Congo during the colonial era. Moerschbacher argues that the Church (religion) was too close to the Belgian colonisers and was thus complicit in the various heinous crimes committed by King Leopold II in the Congo. This should not be so. The Church (religion) must always be on the side of the poor, with its preferential option for the poor. He reminds us, especially our Catholic leaders, of the Catacomb pact signed during the second Vatican Council.

Henry Ukavwe's article on religions' influence on political behaviour uses Nigeria as a case study. The destructive negativity of religions in politics is, according to our contributor, a subtle though active expression of the clash between Western civilisation and its Arabian counterpart. Without mentioning it, Ukavwe's thesis echoes Samuel Huntington's controversial 'clash of civilisation' thesis. Hence, the article ends with a suggestion that there should be a separation of state and religion in Nigeria. Of course, Nigeria is *de iure* a secular country. However, *de facto* religion and state/politics are too close. Perhaps, one can conclude that our contributor is saying that a little secularisation is good for Nigeria.

While Augustus Essien's contribution is not directly related to the volume's central theme, his is an important contribution because it

explores another myth stemming from modernity, and canonised by the secularisation process. Like the state/politics, there is the myth that religion and science are incompatible in a modern state i.e. a state that has entered Enlightenment. Just as there are tensions between the religion and state, there are tensions again between religion and science. Essien attempts recognition of the value of both religion and science. He demonstrates that none of them has all the answers and solutions to all human questions and problems. Hence, there should be respect for boundaries. He ends his contribution by advocating dialogue between philosophy, science and religion.

In the second part of this volume, we present texts of public lectures that aptly sum up the general academic interest and research of NAMISEM academic community during the 2012/2013 session. The first article is the 2012/2013 session Inauguration Lecture. In the light of the Year of Faith, the Inauguration Lecture focused on the interplay of '*Faith, Culture and Inculturation*' in the midst of Africa's multi-religiosity, on the one hand, and the need to make the Christian message and faith meaningful and efficacious in every context it finds itself, on the other. Augustine Ogar MSP, an expert in Missiology, with a passionate academic and pastoral interest in inculturation and African theology who is equally a seasoned missionary, delivered the lecture.

The second article is the 2013 annual St Paul Lecture. The lecture series focus on issues and themes affecting the immediate contexts of the Missionaries of St Paul of Nigeria. Since St Paul engaged with the Areopagites of his time, the Annual Lecture is a form of continuing the tradition of our Patron in contemporary Nigeria. Religious terrorism and the search for sustainable peace are major concerns of Nigeria today. Hence, the 2013 annual St Paul lecture chose to explore religions' paradoxical roles in national development. Mallam Ibrahim Abubakar Jega delivered the lecture on January 19, 2013. Mallam Jega is the Executive Secretary of the National Mosque, Abuja. To our knowledge, this is the first time a high profile Islamic leader and scholar will deliver a public lecture in

a Nigerian Catholic seminary. Jega's principal thesis, similar to that of this volume's lead article, is that interfaith dialogue is indispensable in promoting peace and understanding among Nigerians.

The second part ends with summaries of the best philosophy theses by NAMISEM's students during the 2011/2012 session. Charles Egbon, Louis Edet, and Emmanuel Nwobi share the best theses project in the philosophy department. Godwin Garuba MSP got the best theology thesis award. Egbon and Edet present their theses' summaries in philosophy.

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