


Book Review: Confronting Religious Fundamentalists, Methods and Solution

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Received: 18 February, 2022

Accepted: 26 May, 2022

Published: 11 July, 2022

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**Abstract****Author:** Promise Onyekachukwu Nwobodo**Publisher:** Davgee Ventures Nig**Date of Publication:** 2021**Pages:** 187**Price:** ₦1000

The problems associated with religion and its attendant violence is many. One of the main causes of religious related violence is fundamentalism. In other words, fundamentalism mostly drives violence in the name of religion all over the world. Promise O. Nwodo's piece, takes a contextual approach to discussing the problem of religious fundamentalism in his native, Nigeria—a country that has a very ugly history of religious violence. In this brief but well written book of eighteen chapters, Nwobodo walks his readers through issues relating to religious fundamentalism, beginning with a three-chapter discussion on the Nigerian society, her religious, political, and ethnic make-up which is intertwined with her recurrent problem of religious fundamentalism. In chapters four to seven, Nwobodo shows that almost all world's popular religions have traces of fundamentalism, including Christianity, which seems to be the religious background of the author. Chapters eight to eleven focus on Boko Haram—a terrorist group driven by radical Islamic fundamentalism. In these chapters, Nwobodo dissects the meaning, origin, structure, objectives, and source of finance of Boko Haram including effects of the organisation's terrorist acts on the Nigerian state. Chapters twelve to eighteen of the book are dedicated to discussing dialogue as a means of confronting religious fundamentalism. These chapters discuss what dialogue is, its principles, forms, risks and obstacles in dialogue, and most importantly, methods of sustaining dialogue as a means of confronting religious fundamentalism.

Nwobodo's work is written in simple English. His thoughts are presented in a clear and an understandable way. Thus, one does not need to be an expert in security, peace or conflict studies to relate to what the book discusses. In fact, the book is meant for general readership. This is one of the book's strongest merits. However, I think the organisation of the book—that is, its chapter arrangement, is poor with some chapters having just two pages! This is why a book of 187 pages like this has eighteen chapters. Equally, methodologically, the work should have taken a more field work-based approach. While I understand the author's concern to focus on intercultural and interreligious dialogue (p.9), a more practical methodological approach to its discussion would have included interviews, if possible, with religious leaders in Nigeria as a source of data collection. Through this means, the author would have gained first-hand information on what may motivate religious fundamentalists—let us say members of Boko Haram that the author focuses on. All these notwithstanding, Nwobodo's book is a masterpiece, proposing dialogue as an approach to confronting religious fundamentalists in Nigeria which is novel. I strongly recommend the book for those working in the field of peace and conflict studies, including teachers and students of Religious Studies in Nigeria. The general reader, who is interested in peaceful co-existence in Nigeria, should also take an interest in the book, just as I believe that religious organisations in Nigeria will also find the discussion in the book helpful in dealing with religious fundamentalists.