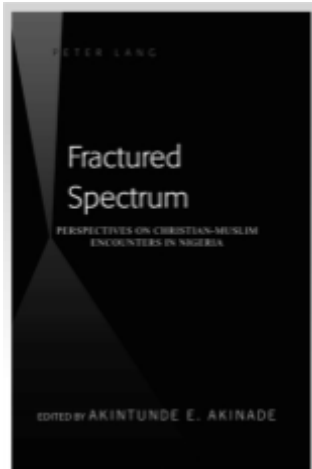


## Book Review



### **Fractured Spectrum: Perspectives on Christian-Muslim Encounters in Nigeria**

**Author:** Akintunde E. AKINADE  
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**Reviewer:** George Odafe

*Religion has unfortunately and ironically become somewhat the obstacle to national cohesion, development and growth in Nigeria today. All matters, political, educational, bureaucratic and social, have come to be commonly handled within the retrogressive polarisation of Muslims and Christians. However, the truth is that problems have their witty ways of pushing individuals and societies to go beyond boundaries to search for solutions. Interreligious crises, which have cost the nation innumerable lives and properties, have pushed people of all walks of life to frantically search for solutions to these and the many related threatening matters that Nigerian society faces today. The complexities of this reality are what this book under review has undertaken to examine in twelve well researched articles.*

*The book is edited by Akintunde Akinade, a Nigerian scholar who is Professor of Theology at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in Qatar. Akinade opens the book with an introductory chapter entitled 'Sacred Rumbings: A Reflection on Christian-Muslim Encounters in Nigeria'. This is followed by an insightful article co-authored by Matthew Hassan Kukah and Kathleen McGarvey, 'Christian-Muslim Dialogue in Nigeria: Social, Political and Theological Dimensions'. They examine the historical factors which shaped the relationship between Muslims and Christians, focusing on the theological as well as the social and political influences, and then see how these three categories continue to shape the relationship today. They identify dialogue as the way forward and raise pertinent observations as to the nature of this dialogue, recommending various theological as well as constitutional parameters within which this dialogue might be more meaningful and fruitful.*

The next article, 'The Cross, the Crescent and the Media in Nigeria', co-authored by Afis O. Oladosu and Habibah O. Uthman-Oladosu, reads as an apologetic of some sort, a rather critical view of mainly Christian journalists, to show how the media has been used to ignite the fires that explode in violence. The authors seek to caution against such abuse and to recommend ethical use of the media as a guiding principle towards harmonious coexistence in Nigeria. Asonzeh Ukah's 'Born-Again Muslims: The Ambivalence of Pentecostal Response to Islam in Nigeria', is quite revealing. The author looks at the encounter between Pentecostal Christianity and Islam in Nigeria and presents some very interesting scenarios and dynamics. Among these is the claim that there are many "Born-Again Muslims", who are drawn by the financial benefits promised by Pentecostal Pastors but remain closet Christians due to the uncomprising nature of Islam in contemporary Nigeria.

Enoch Olujide Gbadegesin's 'Critical Analysis of Christian and Muslim Relations and Space Contestation in Nigeria' paints the theoretical framework and by extension the theological basis for religious space contestation in Nigeria. This article calls to mind how religious space contestation has been largely responsible for the gradual degradation of Nigeria's political, economic, social and geographical life. Unfortunately, the author does not proffer solutions to how religious space can be better managed for effective interreligious co-existence and national development. Ibrahim Uthman's 'Muslim/Christian Encounter in Nigeria and Yoruba Muslim Educational Jihad' is truly an eye opener in his descriptive account of the efforts of Muslims, especially in the West, to establish alternatives to Christian schools. The worthy efforts of Muslims in Yoruba land, as chronicled by Uthman in this article, deserve serious commendation because those efforts laid the foundation for what has grown into Islamic universities in Nigeria today. Regrettably, the author did not examine how these Islamic schools, formed as an alternative to Christian schools, can better cooperate with their Christian counterparts for the betterment of Nigeria.

The article by the legendary Joseph Kenny, sadly deceased only some few months before this book saw the light of day is entitled 'Islam in Nigeria Through 50 Years of Independence'. This article, humorous in nature, is reminiscent of the Socratic dialectical method of educating disciples. By way of a conversation between two Muslim friends, Kenny chronicles the gains and inevitable problems every religion must face as it matures in any given society, just as, Kenny imagines, Islam did in the last 50 years of Nigeria's Independence. He is careful to present Islam as a peaceful and loving religion and delicately recognises that Islam in Nigeria, like every other religion everywhere, has a few "bad eggs" that give it a bad name.

M. O Raheemson's 'Promotion of Religious Peace and Harmony in Nigeria: An Islamic Perspective' blames the British for adopting initiatives and policies against Islam and Muslims which led to the formation of alternative Islamic organizations

which aimed at developing Western derived education within a Muslim context. Raheemson went further to outline the effects of interreligious conflicts in Nigeria and noted in particular the weaponization of the Nigerian State. He concludes that interreligious dialogue has become a must and is possible because of the many common values in both Islam and Christianity. Jacob Kehinde Ayantayo's 'Trust and Confidence Building in the Management of Interreligious Conflicts in Nigeria' spreads on the table two factors necessary for a successful interreligious dialogue: namely, trust and confidence. Lack of trust and confidence are contemporarily in short supply in the religious and social mentalities of both Muslims and Christians in Nigeria, largely because religious leaders have lost control of their followers. He advocates a peace advancement mechanism in which all and sundry build a systematic platform for peace and harmony through the promotion of socio-economic justice, transparency and good governance.

The main core of Olumuyiwa Olusesan Familusi's 'A Survey of Unhealthy Inter-Religious Relations in Nigeria' is an analysis of the factors responsible for religious dissension. These factors include ignorance which breeds irrational fanaticism, the manipulation of religion, and the claim that one's own religion is superior to the other. Recommending as solution to these factors, the author advocates dialogue so that all parties can air their views. He also recommends enforcing a more strict adherence to the Constitution and to the laws of the land so that crimes of discrimination on religious or tribal reasons are treated as crimes and punished accordingly.

In his 'Muslim Perception of Christians and Christianity in Nigeria', Yushau Sodiq says the primary cause of tension between Muslims and Christians in the North is suspicion. He presents the long standing accusations of the Christianization of Muslim children in Christian schools as reason and adds that the over blown self opinionatedness which Christians display after any conversion into its fold can be a source of discomfort for the Muslims. David O. Ogungbile's 'Space Contestation and Religious Identity Among Christian and Muslim Students in Nigerian Universities' decries this unnecessary and unhealthy quarrel for space. Unfortunately, however, he does not suggest how space could be amicably managed by students in the university without any conflict.

Put together, and sometimes overlapping, the articles in this book list all the major problems we encounter, the reasons for these problems, and the major steps that need to be taken towards healing the fractures in our co-existence as Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. Undoubtedly, if these steps were adhered to, our country would by now be on its feet. The road ahead is long and no doubt it will be twisted but if we take some cues from the many insightful and analytical people in our midst, as witnessed by the calibre of the contributors to this book, Nigeria will surely see a better tomorrow. By and large, this book is an excellent read.