

# RELIGIOUS FANATICISM, POLITICAL EXTREMISM AND THE QUESTION OF DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

OLOWOYEYE, Emmanuel Olurokan, PhD  
Department of Religious Studies,  
Gombe State University, Gombe, Nigeria.  
Email: biodunolowo2000@yahoo.com Phone : +234 8061609435

AKWAKI NumgbaAkwaki  
Department of Religious Studies,  
Federal University of Kashere, Gombe, Gombe State, Nigeria.  
Email: akwaki2016@gmail.com Phone: +2348022055252; +2349032191444

YARO Moses Shok  
Department of Christian Religious Studies,  
Kaduna State University, Kaduna.  
Email: mosesshok@gmail.com. Phone number: 08034535478

## Abstract

*An ethic of civic virtues or ideals together with religious precepts thoroughly grounded in the citizenry is the foundation for growing democracy. That is to say a set of ideals shared or subscribed to by the nation, and to which its members have committed themselves. Scholars have shown that the practice of democracy in Nigeria lack this kind of commitment resulting to the appearance of religious fanaticism and political extremism alongside social intolerance and leadership/followership conundrum. So, there was need to interrogate the idea of morality and religious beliefs in the formulation of the desired foundation for the practice of true democracy in Nigeria. To do this, the paper employed documentation method to collect data. Secondary data were sourced from published works on religious fanaticism, political extremism and democracy in Nigeria and elsewhere. Data were contently, historically, philosophically and comparatively analyzed. Therefore, the paper submits that the God-oriented religio-moral approach is urgently needed to revive the commitment of Nigerians to our nascent democracy in accordance with standard practices all over the world.*

**Keywords:** Religious Fanaticism, Political Extremism, Democracy and Development.

## Introduction

The search for an ethic of civic virtues or ideals that will provide the moral foundation or substratum on which to grow democratic institutions, systems, principles, the leaders and the led has been ongoing. The need to provide such a moral foundation has been re-echoed by Nwabueze where he states that: "An ethic of civic virtues must be linked to, and form part of a national ideology. Like constitutional democracy, a national ideology does not consist merely in a set of abstract ideas, however clearly and precisely formulated; it is rather a set of ideas characteristic of a nation, that is today, a set of ideas

shared or subscribed to by the nation, and to which its members have committed themselves.” (254).

Another important aspect to the built-up to this nationalistic morality has to do with a religious belief which has all this while been the anchor of morality. Religious beliefs as we all know provide the needed function and helps transmit commitment to its members. The reason for the search for an appropriate moral anchor and religious moral belief is because the practices of democracy in Nigeria is yet to achieve its maximum benefits largely because of the failure of the leaders, the led and in fact the failure of the judiciary and legislature. This has been shown in what Egwu in Akwaki asserted, that: citizen's perception of state power and politics in general and how this perception in turn affects their involvement in the political (democratic) process has been chequered. Egwu also showed that, in Nigeria, adherence to democratic principles does not preclude violence and lack of faith in elections. This struggle for state power has often resulted in violence and cut-throat competitions which threatened the survival of the whole political community (54).

Worse of it all, Nigeria is a country where religion is suffering from spiritual barrenness; that is, perceptions of matters of morality are conditioned and contorted by primordial ethno-religious sentiments rather than objective spiritual insights (Tikumah 49). DokumOyeshola therefore captures the lack of spirituality thus: “A Spiritual of level of fellow human beings in all circumstances is yet to find deep root in the practice of the faith especially in the context of reconciliation (8). Religious fanaticism has erased its ugly head manifesting in dramatic show of religious superiority from both Christians and Muslims in the country. Here again Tikumah says, tribal divisions tend to mirror religious differences, and hence ethical tribal animosity automatically translates into religious intolerance (42).

Politically, Nigeria has been ruled alternatively by Muslims and Christian (except in the Muhammadu Buhari (Muslim) whose successor Ahmed Bola Tinubu (is also a Muslims) who has not proven satisfactorily to be above religious sentiment. The rule of a Muslim therefore puts Christians on the defensive, and vice versa. Even individuals in the security agencies- the police and the army have been found intervening in religious conflicts with bias towards their own faiths instead of enforcing the law impartially (42).

This paper, therefore, attempts to identify the religious fanaticism and politics extremism that have contributed to the running down of democratic development and will equally develop prospective theoretical submissions that will help surmount same using the moral substratum and religious-ethical principles that will grow the Nigeria democracy in all ramifications.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

At the beginning of any systematic discussion, one is expected to define terms, and our

terms are religious fanaticism, political extremism and democratic development. When we define these terms, they may perhaps guide us to the determination of what constitutes the bulk of examples discussed under the context of the problem and the challenges to democratic development in the country.

### **Religious Fanaticism**

Tikumah sees religious fanaticism to mean the lack of sound knowledge of one's own faith and the sentimental, fanatical and consequently the intolerant attitude to other religions. On the other hand, ignorance about the faith of other people tends to breed suspicion and fear about them (41). For Azogiro, fanaticism is the holier than thou members of a particular religion who insist that others adhere to their belief and teachings (58). A broader definition of religious fanaticism sees it as the religious extremism which in a pejorative designation used to indicate uncritical zeal or obsessive enthusiasm which is related to one's own, or one's group's, devotion to a religion a form of human fanaticism which could otherwise be expressed in one's other involvements.

### **Democratic Development:**

Democracy is a system of government in which people choose their rulers by voting for them in elections. It is self-government, a republican system of government and indeed a commonwealth status system ([www.collinsdictionary.com](http://www.collinsdictionary.com)). Democratic development is the process or result of making a basic design gradually better and more advanced ([www.collindictumany.com](http://www.collindictumany.com)). Democratic development therefore is the gradual growth of the principles of democracy as transparency, accountability, free and fair elections, freedom of speech, rule of law, freedom of association and secrecy of the performance of best practices in all of the above mentioned categories and all that constitute good democratic governance. This is the growing concern of the people for the political, economic, social relations and indeed all aspects of the living standards of the people in the nation. This can be conceptualized as growth/development from traditional attitudes to modern approaches in economic terms by the operations of market and foreign investment; at the social level by the adoption of appropriate institutions, values, and behavior, and at the political level by the implementation of parliamentary decisions or laws by the executive and standard interpretation of such laws by the law courts. It is a holistic approach to the organization and realization of the goals of democratic governance in all ramifications.

### **The Context of the problem**

The conceptual understanding of the key words at hand has been determined. That is to say, we have defined the key words namely religious fanaticism, political extremism and how at a glance we can see that, these are at variance with the conceptual definition of democratic development. Now our main concern is the contextualization of this problem that is talking about the theoretical context of the issue at hand.

Two key issues stand out here clearly: the religious fanaticism and the political

extremism. Again, this form of fanaticism or bigotry is found in both Christian and Muslim sides of the divide. Most Christian fanatics impede progress of relationship by their despicable, discriminatory attitude towards people of other religious especially Muslims and on the other hand, Islamic form of fanaticism often results to intolerance and violence in the name of religions (Hosea, Tonga, Sarki and Agyo 138). There is also this context of what the writers would call Apologetic Angle. By this we mean there are some non-Christians as well as non-Muslims who react apologetically to either the Christian or Muslim fanaticism. They may bear Christian or Muslim names but they are not Christian or Muslims in the real sense of the words. That is they are neither practicing Christians or Muslims. So when they disobey the values and ethical formulations of either Christianity or Islamic religions, they may be considered Christians or Muslims because of their names or that they played fanaticism alongside the two divides.

A third leg of the fanaticism plays out internally. So according to Tikumah, there are internal antagonistic divisions among both Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. The Muslims are divided into *Sunni, Sufi, and Shi'ite* while the Christians are divided into Catholics, Protestants, and the Aladura (39). The writers may add the Pentecostals. Within the Muslim divisions, there are several extremist tendencies namely, the confrontation between these groups by accusations of improper practices of the Sunnah and Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (PBH) and indeed the submissions of Allah (SAW). In Nigeria today, attention has been drawn to the militant forms of religious fundamentalism at some states in the North East: Bornu, Yobe and Adamawa that have become a threat to national security and peace which has a link with insurgent ideology that claim to adhere their fundamentalism with the teaching of Islam, and declared the struggle of Boko Haram as non-Islamic (Jibrin 31).

Within Christianity, the ever increasing denominational, verbal, physical and doctrinal show of superiority that has equally manifested in conflict tendencies, destruction, and name-calling. OgbuKalu has shown that, as an emergent religious form, the Pentecostal movement tends to rub every other religious form (within Christianity) the wrong way, as common parlance would put it. It alleges that the mainline churches are suffering from "Power failure" and indulge in powerless Christianity, dispensing Sunday to Sunday pills. The mainline churches retort that the new fad engages in sheep stealing and propagate a cross-less Christianity (65/66) Femi Olowonibi therefore rightly states: "Christian world has been marked with various conflicting and competing interest which has led to schism and strife within its fold" (253).

The entire intra-religious and inter-religious contests for religious supremacy certainly have foreign influence by way of what one can call the globalization of religious attitudes and sentiments. For the Muslims, there are a number of sub-cleavages that include *Ahmadiyya, Sanusiyya, Tijaniyya and Quadriyya* which in turn have conflicts. The Muslims also have umbrella bodies which aim at propagating different understanding of Islam. These include Jamaatu Nasril Islam (JNI) which was established by Sardauna of

Sokoto in 1961. So following the event in Iran during the Islamic Revolution in 1979, radical fundamentalist activities increased among Muslim Youths. These conditions resulted in the formation of fundamentalist Muslim factions such as the Maitatsine, the Izala movement, the Shiites, the Talibans and most recently the Boko Haram which demanded the establishment of a purist Islam based on Sharia law, the abolition of unorthodox innovations, and the creation of Islamic theocracy (Jibrin 39).

The modes of fanaticism come in form of disagreements, and if care is not taken, it results to violence because of the insistence on the various teachings of the sacred texts been disagreed by both different adherents on religious language as it is the system of thought used to express the tenets or doctrine of a particular religion (Hosea et al 138). There are also mutual abuses by irresponsible manners of propagating religious crises including lack of restraint from provocation and excessive propaganda which leads to religious crises (139).

In extreme cases, fanatics of the both sides take to fighting with dangerous weapon such that lives and properties worth millions of naira are destroyed. That excuses are simply because of certain acts or practices that are not admitted or tolerated by them. Tikumah points to the fact that, some of the socio-cultural crises motivated by religious differences between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria over the last three decades include: The Fage Riots (1982); the introduction of Shariah (1999); The Kaduna Crises (2000); The Miss World Pageant Riot (2002) (39-41). In all the above mentioned religious crises; the aftermath was the incineration of commercial and religious centers as well as loss of many lives (40).

As Ogoh Alobo intoned, "A telling manifestation of the unresolved issue of religious conflicts and attendant killings have dogged the restoration of civic rule" (10). Some analysts have attributed this rise to the unrelenting economic adversity and the keener contests for access to political and material advantages it has spurred among the various religious groups (Egwu (2001); Maier (2000); and Mustapha (1998) in Ogoh 10/11). Speaking of religious fanaticism in concrete terms, Ogoh echoes the submissions of Ibrahim (2000), Ikime (2002), Osaghae (2002); OzoEson and Ukiwo (2001, 2002) who have all shown that there are issues about the place of particular ethnic groups and religious in the scheme of things articulate as marginalization where Nigeria's frequently allege domination by one ethnic/religious group, or even of one geo-political region over another. He goes further to mention that there are ubiquitous complaints about lack of Federal presence, representation in the Federal, State and Local Governments and in the sitting of major development projects such as schools, water treatment plants and access roads (50).

The foregoing experiences indicate threats to the Nigerian democratic development project. The results of all these can only be imagined than told. Clearly some Nigerians are not deep-seated religious believers. Their understanding of religious and moral principle begins and ends with parochial and selfish motifs or designs. So when they

emphasize and insist on their religious application of doctrines and precepts, they are being religiously biased, which is equally religious fanaticism.

On the political landscape, there is also political extremism. Here we can simply summarize that religious fantasists bring their bigotry to bear on all political or democratic coloration. In other words, this is the religious manipulation of politics. The manipulation of religion takes many forms but serves only one purpose. The manipulation of religion presents political contest or election in terms of us versus them and this makes nonsense of political pluralism and freedom of choice inherent in a democracy. The manipulation of religion is intended to drive a wedge between the two dominant religions in the country (Dan Agbese, *The Guardian* 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2022). The current controversy over the Muslim-Muslim Presidential Ticket of All Progresses Congress (APC) throws up the challenge of navigating the religious sensitivities for purposes of capturing power. But the truth of the matter is that, we are not electing religious leaders; we are electing secular political leaders, men who after themselves to serve the nation at the highest level because they believe they have the capacity to turn this misfortune of our nation into fortunes (Dan Agbese, *The Guardian* 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2022).

In the February 25<sup>th</sup> 2023 Nigerian General Election for presidency, Muhammadu Buhari led the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Federation Abubakar Malami, Senator Orji Uzor Kalu and Governor Samuel Ortom to display the highest mode of political extremism by showing the whole world their ballot papers indicating who they voted for. The reason for doing so according to Buhari was to show that he voted for Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu the candidate of the APC who had all this while been doubting Buhari's support especially with the introduction of the Swap of Naira notes and again, the issue of cashless policy that affected all Nigerians including the contestants. But the electoral law prohibits this show of ballot paper after voting. So this is clearly electoral excess in the light of the above. Adeyinka Olumide Fusika (SAN) was right therefore to assert that, "Nigerian politicians are not democrats" (Nigeria Decides, *Arise News* 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2023). In the same way, Bola Ahmed Tinubu said that, "A true democrat must accept the result of the election, if the result is free, fair and credible" (Nigeria Decides, *Arise News* 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2023) yet, all reports emanating from the mass media, election observers and reporters pointed to the un-freeness, and unfairness and un-credible as well as the rigging of the same election that Bola Tinubu was adjudged and announced as the President elect under the APC party. One can only wonder what Tinubu could have done if the result did not favour him after saying the above statement.

The majority leader of the House of Representatives, Alhassan Ado Doguwa was arrested by the police for his alleged role in the killing of several persons and burning of the secretariat of the New Nigerian Peoples Party (NNPP) during the just concluded polls. The source said that the report from the police leadership in Tudunwada stated that, Doguwa personally led the thugs that set ablaze the NNPP secretariat where at least two

persons were burnt to death! He also used the pistol of his orderly and fired at several persons. The police were said to have arrested him in connection to the murder and arson (Saharareporters.com).

Another democratic excess or extremism was the case of a member elect representing Dala Federal Constituency of Kano State on the Platform of NNPP, Aliyu Madaki. *Daily Trust* gathered that, Madaki brandished a pump action gun during a home coming rally of the presidential candidate of the NNPP, Kwankwaso after thugs attacked the motorcade of the NNPP flag bearer along Zaria Road, Kano on 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2023 during the grand finale of his presidential campaign. Madaki was said to have led a crackdown against the thugs (*Daily Nigeria*). The incident equally led to the arrest of the ruling APC chairman of Ungogo and Rimingedo L.G. Areas of Kano State Abdullahi Ramat and Munir Dahiru respectively with pistols by a joint security operative. The police also paraded eight-five (85) thugs arrested alongside the chairmen during the clash but set free the Local Government Chairmen without filing charges against them. Clearly, this may not be unconnected with the powers that be in Kano, also pointing to the recklessness and political misbehavior and corroboration with authorities to run down democracy in Nigeria.

Moreover, and by way of summary on political extremism, Dokun Oyeshola O.P. informs that, electoral processes are surrounded by violence and (charges of) fraud. Riots, violent demonstrations with property damages become more frequent. Political assassination, charges of torture, death in custody, acts of intimidation, restriction on freedom of assembly and speech, and acts of political terrorism occur repeatedly (132).

### **The Question of Democratic Development**

From the foregoing, one can trace some form of historical line of religious extremism and political fanaticism in Nigeria. The fact remains that this paper has not covered one-quarter of these excesses as long as the history of religious and political bigotry in Nigeria is concerned. Now what can we say about the relationship between these fanatical disposition and democratic development?

### **Democratic Development by Violence and Force of the Rulers.**

For some, the beauty of democracy can be seen when and where there is the admixture of these democratic pitfalls and democratic development (progress). In Appadorai, Machiavelli Niccollo comes handy with the benefit accruing from leadership extravaganza. He said: "A prudent ruler ought not to keep faith, when by so doing it would be against his interest, and when the reasons which made him bind himself no longer exist." (10). Again, or in addition to the above Machiavelli said, "If men were all good, this precept would not be a good one; but as they are bad, and would not observe their faith with you, so you are not bound to keep faith with them" (10) A reflection on this shows that, political thought of the period supported absolutism in more than one way. Machiavelli thoroughly freed the rules from the limitations imposed by public morality;

he argued that, the state was an end in itself, existed for its own sake, lived its own life, aimed at its own preservation and advantage, and was not bound by the obligations which should determine the actions of private persons (229).

Thomas Hobbes also supported absolutism by the social contract theory, and above all, the divine right theory was worked out during this period and proceeds useful support to royal absolutism. Essentially, “Monarchy is a divinely ordained institution... kings are accountable to God alone; and non-resistance and passive obedience are enjoined by God.”(229). The nation it is said to be a family with the king as its divinely-appointed head. The duty of the king is to govern like a father; of the people, to obey their king as children obey their parents. So even if the king in wicked argues King James I of England, in Appadori, it means God has elect him as a punishment for people's sins, and it is unlawful to shake off the burden which God had laid upon them. Patience, earnest prayer and amendment of their lives are the only lawfully means to move God to relieve them of that heavy curse (230). We can simply say here that, today we are not dealing with monarchical system completely. While some traditional monarchical elements exist alongside dominant representative or constitutional democracies, care must be taken to swallow hock, line sinker of these postulations. Of course we agree that even today Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ and Apostle Peter cautioned Christian believers of the necessity of obedience to civil authorities, been only relieved by the fact that God punishes leaders who mislead the people (Rom. 13; Heb. 10:30; 1 Peter 2:13-25).

Similar to Machiavelli and Hobbes position, the new leftists in Johari looks like following Marx in one respect and repudiating him in another in the use of violence in a struggle so as to realize the dream of a free and happy society (654). The difference between the two is that while Marxism treats violence as a necessary evil, New Leftists take it as a 'Cleansing force'. Marxism justifies the use of violence for achieving the purpose; as the purpose is achieved, use of violence is denounced. Isaac Deutscher however has helped us to see this Marxism support for violence with the statement that, while the use of violence is justified to bring about first a classless and then a stateless society, it is said to have lost its raison d'être after the abolition of the classes (654).

The violence that has been discussed from the foregoing in both religious and political fanaticism seems to have justification from the submissions of scholars. Marcuse justifies the use of violence on historical and pragmatic grounds that come from the oppressed for it pulls down the edifice of injustice and cruelty and prepares the ground for an increase in the scope of freedom and justice (Johari 654). This directly supports the several violent actions of those who have confronted the government and opposing group in the religious and political process. For Boko Haram (no need to explain the meaning of the concept) their violence was orchestrated largely because “of the wicked political parties leading the country, the corrupt, irresponsible, criminal, murderous political leadership” (Cook 15). Several Nigerian authors have condemned the way the country is been run abysmally, selfishly and undemocratically that leaves much to be desired

(Dzurgba 2003; Jibo 1993; Egbunu 2009; Anyam 2019; DokunOyeshola2005; Igwe 2010; Hagher 2002; Utov 2000; Anshi 2004; Oji 1982). So as seen in Stephen Buchanan-clarke and Peter Knoope *Occasional Paper 23* “The Boko Haram Insurgency: From Short Term Gains to Long Term Solutions” part of the recovery process towards ameliorating insurgency or violence from individual and groups has to do with “desiring economic revitalization programs in areas most prone to recruitment (9), after they supported fact that Nigeria governments have very unpopular government policies and even harass individual journalists and media publications, even where there is constitutional protection for freedom of expression (11).

It must then be stated that, confronting the government with violence may not be the best approach towards resolving the citizen rights and privileges. Known democratic policies can be effected to bring about democratic development. This takes us to the other segment of democratic development by the proposal (legislative) implementation (executive) and interpretation (judicial) democratic policies to bring about fulfilment and satisfaction of the masses through programs and practices.

#### **Democratic Development by Principles and Constitutional Ideas and Facts**

The fact remains that development by violence and confrontation by the led to the rulers does not support the intelligibility of man or human kind. Democracy itself been a western ideology was mounted by the Greeks to overcome the political challenges emanating from the corrupt society, their leaders and the crisis of the city-state. So from Plato till today, democracy has found its success in collaboration with religious and other ecological determinants to grow society. Religion which is our main anchor of democracy has taken the bull by the horns to bring about good moral standards and the success of democracy. Ariel Durant in *Nwabueze* underuses this where he states that, “There is no significant example in history, before our time, of a society successfully maintaining moral life without the aid of religion” (255). Liberty, and democracy took root and flourished in the United States because “the people were virtuous; they were virtuous because they were moral; and they were moral because they were religious” (255).

In Nigeria therefore democracy can be said to develop because of the support of religion. At the very beginning the churches sensitized the Christians about the need to overthrow the yoke of military dictatorship and establish democracy and that has been done. Since 1999 to date (24 years) it is still rolling, though with chequered history. Its establishment alone is a plus to the nation's political history. But beyond this, “a new wind of change is blowing. A new Christian spirit of social engagement has risen up to combat tyranny, corruption and bad governance. Everywhere... where long years of tyranny have held the people captive, we see in the new wind of change, the Christian activists working side-by-side with the liberation groups” (Hagher 69) to set citizens free. Yet, the Christian church in Nigeria is caught up with the unfinished agenda by providing leaders of integrity and honest and eliminating corruption in national life. It was this particular

agenda that the Catholic Church, traditional Protestant Churches, and Pentecostals helped to set the evolution of popular Christianity to which ordinary people (Christians and non-Christians like) find useful a response to the growing impoverishment of the populace and the growth of corruption in national life (70).

Similarly, credit must be given to the contributions of some pious Muslims who in action and prayers contributed to the democratization process (78). Muslim fundamentalist groups were also active in attacking the military (71) but their struggle is sadly not part of the contents of this paper.

### **Challenges to Democratic Sustainability in Nigeria**

It has been established that “deliberative democracy” which is an important aspect of democratic development has been achieved either forcefully through confrontation or on the whole, the placement of emphasis on the inevitability, collectiveness and constructiveness of public debate. It showed that, people are able to raise tough governance questions and present their cases when they feel their interests are threatened by the self-seeking political behavior of the ruling class (Yahaya 318). Yet, there are some challenges that have not been completely surmounted and therefore not yet '*Uhuru*' or completely as success story. First and foremost, there is this challenge of lack of total commitment to national moral ethics of the country namely Discipline, Integrity, Dignity of Labour, social Justice, Religious Tolerance, Self-Reliance and Patriotism (13). Though enshrined in the constitution, it has not been shared or subscribed to by the citizens to which members have committed themselves to. The same commitment that has made the United States of American to grow not because of her commodious harbors and her ample rivers and fertile fields and boundless prairies, her rich mines, vast commerce but because of the virtuousness of the citizenry is completely absent in Nigeria (Alexis de Tocqueville cited in Nwabueze 255).

There is another challenge namely lack of patriotism. Patriotism entails the love of one's fatherland with utmost faith and the consequent protection and defence of the country in all ramifications. Here in Nigeria, ethnic or tribal chauvinism and sympathy is cherished rather than national support. These may be due to narrowly defined interest, the nature of amalgamation, ethnic prejudices, poverty level, religious intolerance, arrant corruption and inept leadership (Egbunu 51).

Besides, the lack of commitment to religious ideals. By this we mean the non-application of Christian ideals, non-practice of Islamic precepts and to a large extent the refusal of African Religious adherents to live up to expectation in their practice of the cultural elements of indigenous virtues. Oral professions are always on the lips of these different religious groups but are not practiced especially when they become leaders. In this way the followers hardly find any justification in doing otherwise. Followers are good learners such that when they follow (learn) well, the success of any society is guaranteed but they fail to learn, then the society is doomed (Akwaki 46).

Indigene and citizenship contestations have brought about contests for citizenship, identity and politics of inclusion and exclusion more ferocious and persistent in Nigeria (Ogoh 11) “Crises and conflicts in the areas being contested have led to eruption and therefore the large scale migration of people and attendant refugee problems, as well as disruption of social, political and economic lives, especially of those directly affected in the various conflict zones but also in the regions of influx” (qtd in Ogoh 20). These crises and conflicts on the land and what our children watch on the Television and elsewhere have become a mimicking style of play where the children hold guns or fashion wood, rubber and any other material in gun-form and run around to hide and shoot themselves around the compounds. This certainly is bringing a bad precedent for our future leaders (the young once).

Intolerance of all sorts, political, social economic, religious, work, play in the country is a thing of concern. In politics particularly, since independence in 1960, our leaders both Christians and Muslims have not proven satisfactorily to be capable of living above religious sentiments (Tikumah 42). Such politicians as findings show is that, “the campaigning politicians everywhere tend to invoke local religious themes and symbols as sources of legitimacy” (Egbunu 32). The list of the challenges is really inexhaustible and could include dismal failure of followership in all manner of misconducts ranging from refusal to respect road signs, the police blocking the roads cajoling, harassing, intimidating and begging for money at gunpoint which has become the euphemism for demanding bribes have become rampant.

### **Prospective Features of Managing Democratic Challenges**

The first step towards addressing socio-political and religious evils in Nigeria has to do with the acknowledgement of the fact that “we are divided”. This is because, the sincerity and faithfulness of those who seem to be interested in reconciliation are often not reflected in their actions. Additionally, honest acknowledgement of the harm and injury parties inflicted on one another is lacking (DokunOyeshola 209). So in much the same way religious attitudes have put us asunder, the same religious attitudes can be re-orientated. The Christian church is a teaching and a learning church. A large percentage of Christians still uphold and practice their religious beliefs for good. This has to do with spiritual dimension of the resolution. The words of Hagher have become apt here namely that, “A politician's faith, his belief in the after-life, in the final judgment of his creator and in the moral code and ethics of his religion will influence his actions and choice of options available to him” (85). So both Christians and Muslims bearing this at the back if their minds will apply the teaching of Jesus to his praxis and the Muslim teachings of Muhammad to his praxis respectively so that at the end of his journey at death, he can justify his earthly journey (85). This ideal has also been emphasized in Durkheim's writings especially in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious life* where he stated that, “any coherent society must rest on a set moral belief which ground the political order on transcendent basis” (qtd in Adogbo 12).

Even the African indigenous practitioners believe in God and they know that injustice done to the least of a member of society can be addressed by the invocation of the gods to do the needful (revenge) Potholm sufficiently underscores that, “In many African countries, leaders were afraid that they would be target of sorcery if they deviated from the accepted norms. Of course many became targets irrespective of their political actions, but the assumption that even the lowliest and weakest commoner could call on enormous supernatural powers was a consistent and potent check on the arbitrary use of power (28).

A continued teaching of the social values as well as political morality and human ethics to the citizenry is important. This keeps reminding them of the need to apply democratic principles all through their lives and grow the process. Working for conflict-resolution also means giving appropriate education and commitment to be done at the primary, secondary, tertiary levels with programs leading to degree in Peace Studies and or Conflict and Peace Studies, Conflict Resolution or Management and like. The mounting of these programs alone does not suffice. The traditional structures and processes within which university education occurs need to be transformed as well (DokunOyoshola 219).

The teaching of moral studies becomes paramount because moral studies work. An example of the inculcation of moral values we have always reported is a case of one Mr. Salami Lateef Ibrahim (a Muslim) an employee of Nigeria Aviation Handling Company (NAHCO) who found 25,000 pounds and 5,000 Euros amounting to N7.3 million in a wallet forgotten in a KLM passenger plane, and returned it to its owner through the company administrators. He was asked while he chose to return the money thantake it away, he said his grandmother taught him not to take away anything that was not his (cited in Akwaki and Fidelis 88). By this we encourage parents to keep teaching moral values to the children because their efforts will not be wasted. After all, the family is the smallest democracy where the microcosmic democratic principles will be used or practiced at the macrocosmic level (the nation, the world).

### **Conclusion**

In this piece of work, attention was drawn to the fact that, religious fanaticism and political extremism have bedeviled the smooth practice of democracy in the country. This manifested in both the Christians and Muslims, and sympathizers or apologetics of these mainstream religions. But in reality and if democracy thrives, its permissiveness affords the led and the leaders to works together in decision-making, decision formulation and implementation of the policies to grow economic, political and social relations. The religions that are used positivelythen will be the basic or moral foundation to grow democracy.

These threats of religious fanaticism and political extremism not with-standing, the paper reiterate the instrument of religious-moral substratum for resolving the crises. This can simply be referred to as a God-centred praxis where all religions have to know that they are answerable to the Almighty God and whoever plays it wrongly will certainly suffer it

in the life after now. The continued teaching of peace and conflict resolution and morality alongside other efforts from parents and institutions will certainly help in the molding of citizen's moral uprightness and therefore the smooth practice of democracy in Nigeria.

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