

An Appraisal of Religious Fanaticism and the Imperative of the Dialogue of Life and Tolerance in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *This paper argues that critical reflection on Nigeria's situation in the context of crisis and conflict reveals that religion ranks first as a cause of crisis and conflict. This paper seeks to engage in philosophical reflection on religious bigotry in Nigeria and ascertain how it affects our existence. The type of research used is qualitative with a descriptive approach. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with respondents, while secondary data came from literature, case studies, previous research reports and related legal documents. Qualitative data analysis uses a thematic approach and data interpretation. The results of this study are on two fronts: the first front preoccupies itself with discourse on the scourge of religious fanaticism in Nigeria, while the second front reflects the fertility of life dialogue as a form of interreligious dialogue to withstand the threat of religious fanaticism with the aim of elevating a culture of religious tolerance that creates peaceful coexistence. necessary for sustainable development and progress in contemporary Nigeria.*

Tulisan ini berpendapat bahwa refleksi kritis atas situasi Nigeria dalam konteks krisis dan konflik mengungkapkan bahwa agama menempati urutan pertama penyebab krisis dan konflik. Makalah ini berusaha untuk terlibat dalam refleksi filosofis tentang fanatisme agama di Nigeria dan memastikan bagaimana pengaruhnya terhadap keberadaan kita. Jenis penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatannya adalah deskriptif. Data primer diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam dengan responden, Sedangkan data sekunder dari literatur, studi kasus, laporan penelitian sebelumnya, dan dokumen hukum terkait. Analisis data kualitatif menggunakan pendekatan tematik dan penafsiran data. Hasil kajian ini ada di dua front: front pertama menyibukkan diri dengan wacana tentang momok fanatisme agama di Nigeria, sedangkan front kedua merefleksikan kesuburan dialog kehidupan sebagai salah satu bentuknya tentang dialog antaragama untuk menahan ancaman

fanatisme agama dengan tujuan mengangkat budaya toleransi beragama yang menciptakan koeksistensi damai yang diperlukan untuk pembangunan berkelanjutan dan kemajuan di Nigeria kontemporer.

Keywords: *Dialogue of Life, Religious Fanaticism, Religious Tolerance.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Religious fanaticism is a social diachronic and subversive unending violent activity that has dared human minds and development in Nigeria. Its effect on society is simplified by religious fanaticism, which has exposed Nigeria to a level of insecurity and backwardness.

“What is objectionable, what is dangerous about extremists is not that they are extreme, but that they are intolerant. The evil is not what they say about their cause, but what they say about their opponents.” Robert F. Kennedy.

Religious Fanatism is a violent activity which has dared human minds and development in Nigeria (Ugwuoke, Ajah, & Onyejebu, 2020). Its effect on society is simplified in religious fanatic ideologies, which have exposed Nigeria to insecurity and backwardness. Nigeria as a country is at a crisis point, and for the most part, the problem stems from the abuse and misuse of religion (Emeng & Okafor, 2022). A critical reflection on the Nigerian situation within the context of crisis and conflict and the extent to which they have affected the Nigerian state reveals that religion ranks first in the cause of crisis and conflicts, and only ethnicity comes close in the same regard. In this sense, religion, rather than what one expects, has contributed to slowing down efforts geared toward developing the Nigerian state in that it constitutes a clog in the wheels of the nation's progress through the intolerance that the fanatical, extremist and fundamentalist temper elevates. Christianity, Islam and African Religions represent the face of religion and its practice in Nigeria because they constitute the major religious tradition recognised and practised in the country.

Amongst the various strands of Christianity practised in Nigeria, one finds an internal crisis occasioned by the spiritual arrogance and fanatical disposition of members of the various denominations and block of the Christian Association of Nigeria. The same goes for the Islamic religious communities in Nigeria and at a lower scale among the practitioners of African religion. The fact of the existence of these intra-religious skirmishes does not negate the apparent existence of the same crisis at the inter-religious level between Christians and Muslims, Muslims and African Religion and Christianity and African Religion as the case may be. Sequel to the above, it feels safe to argue that the "prevailing religious conflicts, persistent religious riots, rampant killings of innocent lives and destruction of property, all in the name of religion, are indicative of the fact that religious fanaticism has taken over the Nigerian scene" (Ushe, 2012).

Practitioners of these religions have for the most part assumed an arrogant position where they argue to a crisis point when issues regarding their faith and belief are mentioned maintaining at the same time that their individual religions are more religious than the other religions and that their God is more God than the God that the other

religions worship and seek after. This temper relegates and negates the complementary nature of our collective existence and fuels the ambers of conflicts and crises antithetical to tolerance, peaceful co-existence, development and progress.

This paper seeks to engage in a philosophical reflection on religious fanaticism in Nigeria and to show it has affected our existence as human beings. Consequently, the trajectory of this paper is on two fronts: the first front concerns itself with a discourse on the spectre of religious fanaticism in Nigeria while the second from reflects on the fecundity of the dialogue of life as one of the forms of interreligious dialogues at stanching the menace of religious fanaticism with the intent elevating the culture of religious tolerance that makes for the peaceful co-existence that is needed for sustainable development and progress in contemporary Nigeria.

II. METHOD

This type of research used is qualitative. Involves in-depth analysis of individual perceptions, attitudes and behavior regarding religious fanaticism and dialogue of life and tolerance. The approach is descriptive which describes the phenomenon of religious fanaticism and the importance of dialogue in tolerant religious life. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with respondents who have experience with religious fanaticism and life dialogue and tolerance. While secondary data from literature, case studies, previous research reports, and related legal documents. Qualitative data analysis used a thematic approach to identify patterns and themes that emerged from the interviews. Data interpretation means analyzing research findings with reference to relevant theories and frameworks (Eyo Emmanuel & Udofia, 2016). The research process was carried out in several stages. The data collection stage is conducting in-depth interviews with selected respondents. The data analysis stage, conducted a qualitative analysis of the collected data, identified patterns, themes and conclusions that emerged regarding religious fanaticism and dialogue of life and tolerance. The interpretation and discussion stage is interpreting the research findings, analyzing the theoretical and practical implications, and discussing the research results with a theoretical basis and related research findings.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Nigeria and the Spectre of Religious Fanaticism and its Effects on the Nigerian State

Before a discourse on the spectre of religious fanaticism will ensure, it is important, as one will expect, to account for the meaning of religious fanaticism and to operationalise the concept to ensure perspicuity and clarity. Religious fanaticism is "an irrational attitude to religion which leads the religionist to practice religion beyond the bounds of reason and, therefore, without moderation" (Iwe, 2000). For (Balogun, 1988), religious fanaticism is a violent and unreasoning religious enthusiasm and the inability of religious adherents to harmonise between those theories and the practical aspect of religion. For Danfulani, as quoted in (Ushe, 2012), religious fanaticism is essentially a negative and vicious attitude to religion, characterised by exaggeration and immoderation,

manipulation and exploitation, excesses and violence. Religious fanaticism is the "manipulation of religion and religious beliefs by religious adherents to satisfy their selfish interest. It is also a negative attitude to religion which often involves violence" (Ede, 2020). It is described as a "blind belief that an idea or doctrine is absolutely true, and that is acceptable and even right to force others to share that particular idea" (Gwamna, 2014).

This paper conceives religious fanaticism to connote some form of unguided enthusiasm within the context of one's religious practice as well as an attempt to elevate one's religious traditions, doctrines and ideas to the point that one prejudices, derides and disparages the practitioners or adherents of other opposite religions on the one hand and forces others to believe the same on the other hand. Religious fanaticism is characterised by a concerted effort to "do anything in order to protect the interest of their religion at the detriment of national interest" (Ogbonnaya & Ugoha, 2015). Speaking of the effects of this religious temper on the Nigerian state, (Iwe, 2000) as quoted in Ogbonnaya and Ugoha, argued that "violent religious fanaticism is the only force capable of turning the twin religious and spiritual blessings of Nigeria, Christianity and Islam, into a cultural bane or curse, if it is not duly eradicated and left to be exploited by unpatriotic socio-political forces and manipulators."

On the characteristics of a religious fanatic, one can argue and hence, sum that the religious fanatic possesses an unwavering commitment to, as well as conviction about the rightness of his convictions and holds that his/her convictions are right and hence, such a fanatic is not ready to accept another idea even if the other view is superior to the one he/she holds. Secondly, the attitude of the religious fanatic is characterised by an attempt at imposing his/her beliefs which are considered to be absolutely right on other people whom he/she believes are wallowing in the sea of ignorance. And finally, the religious fanatic is ready to sacrifice his life and the lives of others in a bid to force people to believe what he or she believes. In this final sense, (Hassouna, 2018), quoting Marimaa argued that a religious fanatic is willing to sacrifice not only his/her time and money but even his/her life to make his/her ideas dominant in society. He/she is ready to sacrifice the closest person to him to prove his fidelity and devotion to his sacred goal.

Religious fanaticism is not exclusively a Nigerian problem. Globally, one finds this temper in other nations of the world and various attempts to stem the tides of the same. From Pakistan to India to Afghanistan and elsewhere, religion has been cashed into and used by people who consider themselves as the custodian of their religion and argue for the fact that their religion is the best that there can be while deriding other religions (Salaam, 2012). (Hassouna, 2018) corroborated the above when he argued that "our world is suffering from religious fanaticism that is widely spread in many regions, countries and places. We have a lot of religious fanatic groups everywhere in the middle east, in Africa, in Asia, in America and in Europe" (p. 260). (Kunhiyop, 2008) seems to be thinking in line with Hassouna, thought with specificity when he averred that "the Middle East is racked by conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians, and groups within Iraq fight against each other...in Europe, there are conflicts between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland ... and between Hindus and Muslims in India."

In Nigeria, the story is no different. From Christianity to Islam and, to a large extent, African religion, one finds traces of fanaticism and other allied ideologies like religious extremism and fundamentalism that have fueled the high level of intolerance in Nigeria. A critical look at the religious climate of Nigeria reveals that the diverse religious groups try to argue for their supremacy through concerted efforts at deriding and refuting the claims of the opposing religion, and this mindset is transferred to their children. The implication is that these children get indoctrinated by these ideas and hence, the apparent fanatical and unreasonable attitude and hostility with which they see the other religions. While not differing from the above position, (Church-Hill, 2020) argued within the context of the sparingly qualified nature of those who hand down religious traditions to the younger generation. He averred that "when those bequeathed with the responsibility to transmit and interpret scriptures to their religious attendants are half baked, the resultant effect is that their products will be religiously idiots." While quoting (Iwe, 2000) further argued that:

Misinterpretation of the scripture is common among the religions of the book, such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. In Islam, fanatics and fundamentalists misinterpreted Jihad to stand for physical combat against non-Muslims instead of a spiritual attack against evil and demons. Religious fanatics or fundamentalist adopts purely literal as opposed to metaphorical or mythical interpretations of their holy scripture and deny the validity of interpretations of other religious traditions and assume that religious truth resides with their own perspective, thus, creating a lopsided message to their adherents and the society. The literal interpretation of the scriptures could lead to false doctrine, and false doctrine could lead members to puff up with the sense of superiority in revelation, making the one in error unteachable and placing emphasis upon fleshly activities as a gateway to the spiritual, as in asceticism and vegetarianism.

(Ede, 2020) seems to be thinking in the above line when he argues that "one of the dangerous attitudes of adherents of various religions in Nigeria is the claim of the supremacy of their religions over others. Most religious practitioners, especially Christians and Muslims, see their religion as the only authentic one. With this state of mind, they adopt every possible means to ensure that others are converted to their faith."

In Nigeria, most of the fanatical temper and disposition towards religion and its practice is found in Islam and Christianity. Within the context of Islam, it is reported that the main goal of Islamic fanaticism is to reform and revive the Muslim community by education and force, and hence, they call for a true Islam that is devoid of any innovation of or to its doctrine. In this sense, for Islamic fanatics, all Muslims must be reformed to conform to Islamic laws and Islamic governments should be established and maintained (Nabiebu & Otu, 2019). (Ushe, 2012) further argued that the most renowned fanatics today within the context of Islam are the *Maitatsine* and *Boko Haram*. The further argues for the above in the following lines:

Maitatsine seems to have condemned Islam's main principles as laid down in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah. They also condemned the Holy Qur'an and denounced

the prophet Mohammed...*Boko Haram*, on the other hand have... exhibits characteristic features of fundamentalism and fanaticism or extremism. They are anti-western education, destructive and intolerant, even to their parents, friends and the government. They also condemn, sometimes in an undisguised language and as strongly as they can, all those who have accepted Western civilisation and do not share their religious view... they demonstrate a holier-than-thou attitude in all places and at all occasions.

The effects of the activities of the above fanatical Islamic groups in Nigeria are monumental, and a succinct account of the same lie beyond the purview of this paper. However, it remains to state here that through the instrumentality of these groups, lives have been lost in thousands, properties have been destroyed beyond quantification, several individuals have been permanently displaced from their homes and the religious landscape of Nigeria to present still heated as a result of the activities of the *Boko Haram* Islamic sect.

In the same vein, fanatic Muslims have corrupted the original Koranic meaning of the Jihad and introduced the principle of holy war in order to spread Islam by the sword and forced conversion. The forced conversion to Islam in some Nigerian communities in history, like the ancient Hausa states by Shehu Usman Dan Fodio in the 19th century, stemmed from and was inspired by religious fanaticism, which also led to the loss of lives and property and the infringement of the rights of people within the context of religious affiliation (Ushe, 2012). Still on Islamic fanaticism in Nigeria, one finds a situation where a Nigerian Islamic cleric purportedly ordered his followers to kill a Christian woman who does early morning preaching in her neighbourhood in July 2016 (Enweonwu, Ugwu, Onyejebu, Areh, & Ajah, 2021). This is undoubtedly an act inspired by a fanatical temper because the Muslims also call adherents of their religions to pray at dawn as much as the woman also wakes up for her 'morning cry'. Should the cleric and his followers not consider his understanding of God as superior and pure and to have reached its watershed in total disregard for the preaching of the Christian woman, they would not have been offended and irritated by her preaching and hence, the call for her head and her subsequent murder. (Enweonwu et al., 2021) further stressed that elsewhere.

Fifteen predominately Christian communities in the same local government area in Plateau State came under intense attack from an armed Moslem group in August 2018. In that attack, a Christian reverend, his wife and children were particularly burnt alive in their church building. The attack culminated with over 230 death casualties and more than 11,500 refugees who fled their homes. ... Each was a case of a group of people who misconstrued the teachings of Islam and were motivated by this error to behave violently against other people.

Within the context of Christianity, fanaticism also exists, maybe not to the magnitude of the destruction of lives and properties. There is a sustained hostility between Catholic Christianity and Pentecostal Christianity. This hostility reached its crescendo when some Christian sects or denominations referred to themselves as 'living or holy churches', and the simple inference that can be made from such an appellation is that the other churches are 'dead or unholy churches' that should be derided and jettisoned because

they do not have the light that can shine the path of someone and lead the same to heaven. This fanatic temper is also targeted at other religions (). While it may be true that fanatical Christian groups do not outrightly attack and burn down mosques, they have attacked and burned down shrines, cut down trees and even killed the priest of African religion in the name of spiritual cleansing while quoting the biblical injunction which stipulates that 'they should not suffer a witch to live'.

In Nigeria, several cases of fanaticism involving the three major religions affect freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (Udofia & Uduigwomen, 2022). (Okwueze & Kanu, 2003) enumerate some of the abuses, including the 1980s *Maitatsine* sect that unleashed mayhem on innocent citizens; in most cases, the Muslims refused to allow Christians to preach and spread Christianity where the Islamic religion is dominant. Any attempt to do this always leads to riots and killings. As it were, freedom of religion as a crucial fundamental human right can, no doubt, be threatened by religious adherents when they are engaged in conflict or experience times of unhealthy tension over beliefs, doctrines, practices, or interpretations of scriptures. It also arises over recruitment of numbers, occupation of territories, acquisition of land, control of politics and government, expansion of the sphere of influence, and exercise of authority and power (Dzurgba, 2010).

(Ogbonnaya & Ugoha, 2015) summed up the spectre of religious fanaticism in Nigeria in the following lines when they argue that the Christians.

Regard both Muslims and African Traditionalists as those who have no salvation in their religions and are doomed for all eternity. Therefore, they must be converted to the Christian faith to gain salvation. This is also the case with Islam in Northern Nigeria, where their adherents are so fanatical. These religious adherents see all non-Muslims as infidels that should be made by violence or any other means to become a member of their religion or be exterminated. This kind of mindset has informed and engineered the activities of the Islamic set called Boko haram. This sect sees Islam, its educational system, and Shariah law as the only authentic education and law that all Nigerians should be taught and made to imbibe and live.

While it returns true that most parts of the fanatical dispositions are displayed by Christianity and Islam and two major religions accounting for the larger part of the conflicts and crises that arise from the intolerance that the fanaticism, extremism and fundamentalism that both religions bread with African religion at the receiving end, it remains to argue that it was the tolerance displayed by adherents of traditional religion in part that accounted for the spread of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria (Kukah, 1993). Consequently, it is expected that these religions should not take to spiritual arrogance, highhandedness and intolerance in their practice and evangelisation.

One can go on and on, chronicling and describing the spectre of religious fanaticism in Nigeria. In fact, anyone who is abreast of the happenings in the religious landscape of Nigeria can sustain the discourse on religious fanaticism in Nigeria in a very long sequence without running short of ideas and historical evidence to sustain such an argument. However, this paper considers that as both descriptive and will constitute a mere belabouring point, especially when the attempt at solving the problem is not

advanced in a manner that is profound. Consequently, the discourse on the spectre of religious fanaticism in Nigeria here stays to allow the paper the latitude to engage in philosophical reflection on the same as well as proffer the way out of this conundrum.

Beyond Religious Fanaticism in Nigeria: Perspectives from the dialogue of life

In light of the preceding discussion and Nigeria's current existential situation, it is apparent that religion, as it is currently practised in Nigeria, is a double-edged sword that has killed more people than it has cured (Haaga, 2022). This viewpoint is linked to the intolerance that underpins religious fanaticism, extremism, and fundamentalism. However, considering what philosophical orientation is best suited for, and has the potential to heal these ailments, exposes the importance of dialogue of life and tolerance philosophy. These are here referred to as the philosophical orientations that Nigeria needs in her bid to surmount the problems associated with religious fundamentalism, extremism and fanaticism as she tries to leap in the direction of progress and development.

The dialogue of life is one of the forms of interreligious dialogue. (Zago, 1988) in his paper entitled "Mission and Interreligious Dialogue" identified the dialogue of life or living dialogue, the dialogue of cooperation, the dialogue of religious experience, theological dialogue and official dialogue among religious authorities. Of all these forms, he argued the most common form of dialogue that is practised by ordinary people in the situation of everyday life is the dialogue of life. This type of dialogue involves "respecting persons as believers on a neighbourly basis and establishes constructive and positive relationships, not so much in spite of religious diversity as because of it" (p. 100). The dialogue of life leads to a deeper understanding of the religious experiences of others and it finds relevance in a society that is pluralistic within the context of religion.

Corroborating (Zago, 1988), (Varkey, 2017) intimated that the dialogue of life is a form of interreligious dialogue that takes place between believers of different religions, as they interact with each other in their daily lives in families, schools, places of social or cultural contacts, workplaces, in politics, trade or commerce and other areas. Quoting Arinze, he further stressed that this type of dialogue is made possible when people from different backgrounds are open to one another in their everyday interactions. While religion may not be the actual subject of concern in the discourses, the people draw from the values of their individual beliefs and traditions; and should the discussion about their relationship with God take place, it is because the people are basically religious and matters of religious interest form part and parcel of their daily discussion. (Sintang, Baharuddin, & Hambali, 2012) Contributing to discourse on the dialogue of life within the context of its meaning and nature, (Kuruvachira, 2003) stressed that the dialogue of life is the first form of dialogue. He further stressed that it implies concern, respect and hospitality towards the other. It leaves room for the other person's identity, mode of expression and values. To quote him:

Dialogue of life is not something passive or mere co-existence. It requires openness, a desire to enter into relations with others. Its aim is to establish good neighbourly relations to ensure that people live in peace and harmony. This form of dialogue in

the neighbourhood, at school, and in the workplace concerns everybody and is within the capacity of all (Kuruvachira, 2003).

While, as he argues, the dialogue of life does not require any special training but sympathy and respect and allows lay people to play active and key roles, he also argues that despite its spontaneity, it requires effort and perseverance. In this type of dialogue, people strive to live in harmony and with an open spirit with their neighbours and in the process, share their joys, sorrows and perhaps, problems together. On how the dialogue of plays out, (Varkey, 2017) argued that the dialogue of life challenges adherents of religions to "offer witness to their faith in their day-to-day lives, and thereby attain dignity and respect without oppressing. This mutual enrichment is essential for community development and peaceful co-existence. The dialogue of life, it must be noted, does not seek the areas of convergences and similarities between religious traditions but rather seeks the culture of peace in the face of the apparent differences in the religious practice of people in the community.

The dialogue of life is very important in a religiously plural society because, as (Sintang et al., 2012) argues;

Getting to know others is a dialogical relation to promote amicable relationships with people of different religions. It begins when one encounter, lives and interacts with others and participates in daily life activities together. The social interaction marks the involvement of non-elite participants in the inter-religious dialogue at the grassroots level. The non-elite participation in inter-religious dialogue is necessary to accommodate the challenge of a pluralistic society. The process of social interaction in everyday activity is known as a dialogue of life.

Reviewing the above within the context of Nigeria as a religiously plural society, (Akinade, 2002) argues for the fact that the dialogue of life takes place in the everyday interaction of Nigerians. To quote him;

This is a form of dialogue of life that operates on practical and day-to-day terms. Christians and Muslims live next to each other; mingle freely in all aspects of human endeavour, meeting in the marketplace and on the streets, in schools and other institutions. Both Christians and Muslims are awakened every morning by the strident voice of the muezzin from the minaret of the mosque, urging faithful believers that "it is better to pray than to sleep." Christians receive Christmas and Easter greeting cards from their Muslim friends, neighbours, and relatives. Muslims are present in churches for the baptism, wedding, or burial of relatives and friends. In this dialogue of life, Christians and Muslims are enriched by each other's experience and spirituality, and strengthened by certain features of the faith of the other.

Accounting for the difference between the dialogue of life and interreligious dialogue, (Olorunnisola, 2019), quoting Samwini argued that the dialogue of life is a direct challenge to religious people, non-religious individuals, towns, and communities to accept one another no matter their differences in belief and practice. It differs from interreligious dialogue which often involves listening to one another about the content of

each other's faith. Unlike interreligious dialogue which seeks, among other things to build understanding on similarities between different faiths, dialogue of life does not necessarily look for similarities but seeks to bring peace even amidst acknowledging differences. The process thereby generates peaceful co-existence and enables people to promote spiritual and cultural values, which are found in the distinct outlooks of followers of other religions. Peaceful co-existence leads to a growth in relationships through a process of mutuality that generates greater understanding and mutual enrichment.

The above notwithstanding remains to argue that religious fanaticism, extremism and fundamentalism pose a huge threat to peace and as well, constitute a clog in the wheel of development in Nigeria. This is because of the hostilities that come with these religious tempers foisting intolerance and breaches the peace that is a necessary condition for development and progress. Hence the need for the dialogue of life to be allowed to take centre stage in our existential life as a religiously plural society. The dialogue of life, when allowed to take root, downplays the idea that one's God is more God than the other's God and the idea that one's religion is more religion than the other's religion. In this sense, adherents of the various religious traditions will come to terms with the fact that it does not make sense to elevate one's religious belief over that of the other and hence to kill in God's name. They will also come to terms with the fact that the other religious tradition needs to exist for the status of a reality to be conferred on his religion owing to the fact that anything that is compared to itself is no reality. (Agede, 2017) seems to be thinking in the above sense when he argued that;

It is contradictory to kill in the name of God that is all-loving and all merciful. It is unconscionable for one to expect heavenly rewards for killing in God's name... the validity of religious claims are demonstrable only within the paradigms within which they are entertained. For example the truths of Christianity are valid and demonstrable only within the paradigm of Christianity, even as other religions may find the same objectionable. The same holds for the truths of Islam. What is more, the truth of one religion must not be annulled or cancel out the truth of another necessarily in order for it to be valid or meaningful.

Regarding the necessity of the dialogue of life, it also remains to say that the dialogue of life leads to the dialogue of corporation, collaboration and common social actions which is also needed for the overall development of the Nigerian state. Sinanget'al corroborated the above when they argue that the dialogue of life will lead to the dialogue of collaboration where "adherents of various religions corporate for the promotion and human development and liberation in all its forms. This form of dialogue is exemplified in social concerns inspired by religious motives, such as in the study and execution of development projects and initiatives to foster justice and peace. This reasoning will constitute good grounds for peaceful co-existence.

A look at the heterogeneous nature of Nigeria within the context of religion and ethnicity reveals the imperativeness of dialogue and more than just dialogue, the dialogue of life. The dialogue of life will help to elevate the idea that no religion is superior to the others and the idea that there is one God and many religions or approaches of reaching Him; it

will also diffuse all fanatical, extremist and fundamentalist tendencies amongst adherents of the various religious traditions in Nigerian. Consequently, the promotion of the dialogue of life at all levels in Nigeria will encourage a harmonious and peaceful co-existence between and among the adherents of various religious traditions in the country, the consequence of which is development and progress.

IV. CONCLUSION

In the preceding discourse, attempts have been made appraise the phenomenon of religious fanaticism to account for spectre of religious fanaticism in Nigeria from the prism of philosophy. This attempt proceeded from a discourse on the spectre of religious extremism and fanaticism in Nigeria to a philosophical reflection on the menace. Upon a reflection on the problem, this paper introduced the dialogue of life as orientation that can foster tolerance and reduce the phenomenon of religious extremism and fanaticism to its barest minimum. Drawing from the reflection on the problem, the paper found out that religious fanaticism and extremism as a problem currently bedeviling the Nigerian state is rooted in the minds of Nigerians which have been misinformed, mis-educated and indoctrinated to assume its current temper. Consequently, the paper advocated for the elevation of the highest form of interreligious dialogue which is the dialogue of life in the fight against religious fanaticism, extremism and fundamentalism in Nigeria. This dialogue which entails the interaction and intermingling of adherents of the varied religious traditions in Nigeria as have been argued earlier will lead to the dialogue of cooperation, collaboration, common social action and a sustained peace that is needed for Nigeria to leave the tarmac in her flight towards sustainable development. To get out of this conundrum, this paper argues for the re-education and retraining of the minds of Nigerians within the context of dialogue and tolerance. The paper concludes that it is with this re-education of the mind that Nigerians can unlearn the seemingly wrong conception of religion and its practice and then conceive religion in complementary term that tolerance, which is the necessary ingredient for peace and development can be attained.

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