RELIGIOUS ISSUES IN A DEMOCRATIZING SOCIETY: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Fifty years of research into the political cultures and societies of democratizing developing countries, especially those of Africa, has demonstrated the vital importance of religion in shaping their politics, society and economy. Religion has been both a disintegrating and an integrating factor in those societies. Religion permeates all aspects of the society. In Nigeria, the three main recognized religions-Christianity, Islam and Traditional -have followers that cut across all the six geo-political Zones of North-West, North –East, North-Central, South-West, South-East and South-South as well as the Federal Capital Territory Abuja. In addition, there are pockets of adherents of other religious as well as atheism. Religion has served historically as a primary glue in democratizing societies and as a primary motivator in their Socio-politico-economic development. Religions have served both a positive force in nation-building and a negative major line of social and political tensions in the past and the present. What are the religious issues in a democratizing society such as Nigeria from the Islamic view point? What is the relationship between religions and the state? This paper attempts to provide some answers

INTRODUCTION
The Place of Religion in Society
There is a lot of mis-conception about religion the world over. Some see religion as an institution which anyone can set up like an ordinary business. Some do not see it beyond the utility of domination of one group. Others see religion as belonging to either Jews, Arabs or Indians when they consider popular doctrines. Whatever opinion is held about religions, the fact remains that religion still exerts a considerable influence over the economic, social and political life of people everywhere. (Olayiwola 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009, 1996,1995, 1993, 1991,1990, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1984, 1974). Religion is the belief in the existence of a god or gods, and the activities that are connected with the worship of them (Hornby, 1997). It is the belief in, recognition of, or an awakened sense of, a higher unseen controlling power or powers, with the emotion and morality connected therewith (Kirkpatrick, 1983). The object of religion is eternal truth in its objectivity, God nothing but God, and the explication of God. The need for religion and religious understanding can not be over emphasized. This is because with its beliefs, doctrines, ideals, codes, practices and techniques, religion exerts a vast influence over economic, social, cultural and political life of human beings and nations. Religion is not only a matter of conscience but it is also a way of life. It regulates man's relationship with fellow human beings. Man is incurably religious. Religion consists in man's concern for his ultimate value and how to attain it, preserve it and enjoy it. The fear of God, it is said, is the beginning of wisdom.

Religion is a set of common belief and practices generally held by a group of people. Religion is a system of faith that is based on belief in the existence of a particular God or gods

People's religious beliefs and their social organizations are closely interrelated. When all our troubles-political, economic, social-come to us, we decide to pray; we turn religious over - night and even some of those who claim to be free-thinkers become religious consciously or unconsciously whenever they pray to God for Divine assistance at the time of trouble. To be sure, it is not impossible to hear some people, probably the infidels and apostates, who may still have questions agitating their minds. Such old questions include: Is religion really a fact of life? Does religion represent the temperamental constitution of an individual so that one may not believe in it as there is no difference between the two states of belief and unbelief? The list of such questions are not far-fetched. Whether we like it or not, religion has come to stay. Islam is the world-wide religion, revealed for the guidance of all humanity, and the completion of the divine message to mankind. Over a fifth of the World's population are Muslims. Muslim communities are found in more than 120 countries, not only in Africa and Asia but also in Europe and America. The country with the largest Muslim population is Indonesia. Muslims make up a quarter of the population of the former Soviet Union. There are over two million Muslims in Britain. Etymologically, the word Islam is derived from Salaam meaning Peace

ISLAM AND SOCIETY

In order previous papers, we have examined in detail the various relationships between Islam and Society. Islam does not admit a narrow view of religion by restricting it within the limits of worship, specific rituals and spiritual beliefs. In its precise meaning, Islam is not only a religion; it is also a way of life that organizes all the aspects of life on the scale of the individual and the nation. Islam is a social order, a philosophy of life, a system of economic rules and of government. (Ali, 1950). Islam clearly establishes man's duties and rights in all relationships- a clear system of worship, civil rights, laws of marriage and divorce, inheritance, code of behaviour, laws of economy, laws of governance, laws of war and peace, of buying and selling and laws of relationship and coexistence with one another- parents, children, relatives, neighbours, guests, Muslims, non-Muslims and brethren, (Olayiwola, 1987, 1988, 1991, 1992, 1993,1995,1996,2009,2010,2011,2012). Nationalistic,   patriotic   and political relevance are not left out in this all – pervasive and ubiquitous impact of Islam on society. We do know for instance, that the works dedicated to political philosophy and sociology form one of the greatest jewels of Muslim literature; writers in the three principal languages of Islam- Arabic, Persian and Turkish, expounded profound and varied views on the art of government and the diverse problems of community life.

As time and space would not permit us to dwell more upon this, some eminent Muslim scholars in the fields of political philosophy, sociology and history must be singled out for mentioning. These are Abu Yusuf Ya'qub b. Ishaq al-kindi, Muhammad b. Turkhan Abu Nar al-Farabi, Abu Jacfar Muhamad b. Jarir at-Tabari and 'Abdur Rahman Ibu Khaldum, to mention just a few. This list does not include the names of erudite Muslim scholars in the fields of Mathematics, Medicine, Geography, Astronomy, Chemistry,Physics, Architecture,

Law, Agriculture, Education and a host of other branches of knowledge. (Bammate, 1962). As a matter of fact, political thought has been most active area of **muslim** intellectual life. If we consider Islam as a comprehensive scheme for ordering human life, then politics should be an indispensable instrument to secure universal compliance with that scheme. For instance, if politics is about the struggle for and the shaping and sharing of power, then there can hardly be a more political word-vision: always conceiving of human nature in terms of both its physical and spiritual needs, Islam is never content with the more exposition of its ideas, but it constantly seeks the means to implement them-and power is an essential means toward this end. If the essence of politics is participation or the art of living and working with others, then four of the five 'Pillars' of Islam (prayer, fasting, alms-giving, pilgrimage, the excluded fifth being testimony to the unity of God and messengership of Muhammad) are perfectly suited to promoting e**spirit de corps** and group solidarity among its followers. If according to another viewpoint, the hub of politics is about choice, the legitimating of supreme authority or the dispute as to who should rule and why should we obey the rulers?, then no conscious Muslim can study his history even in the most casual fashion without feeling the urge to ask these questions, and discuss them with his co-religionists, (Olayiwola, 1993,1996, 2009, 2010, 2011,2012). President Barack Hussein Obama of the U.S.A eloquently remarked as follows, on June 4, 2009, in Egypt, in a speech directed to Muslims worldwide:

> *As a student of history, I……. know civilization's debt to Islam. It was Islam- at places like Al-Azhar University – that carried the light of learning through so many centuries, paving the way for Europe's Renaissance and Enlightenment. It was innovation in Muslim communities that developed the order of algebra; our magnetic compass and tools of navigation; our mastery of pens and printing: our understanding of how disease spreads and how it can be healed. Islamic culture has given us majestic arches and soaring spires; timeless poetry and cherished music; elegant music; elegant calligraphy and places of peaceful contemplation. And throughout history, Islam has demonstrated through words and deeds the possibilities of religious tolerance and racial equality. (Govt. Press, 2009).*

Today, Muslims constitute over a fifth of the world's population inhabiting more than 120 countries on the continents of Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas; including over two million Muslims in Britain. The continuing vitality of Islam is clearly visible in the contemporary world. The Islamic world is vast geographically as well as numerically; Islamic countries wield considerable economic clout. Islamic resurgence and revivalism have now become a "media event" with all its attendant distortions. Despite the great media and academic attention to the resurgence of Islam since the 1970's proper understanding of Islam, Muslims their religious revival, culture, way of life and their socio-politico-economic implications, is sorely lacking. Also, sadly deficient is the understanding of the Muslims and Islamic nations search for a more meaningful and effective development path, communication and information strategies in the process of propagating Islam and disseminating its teachings, lessons and glad tidings. Islam is the guidance for mankind and its message is universal and eternal. Islam is not a religion only guaranteeing the betterment and upliftment of an individual's private and personal life. Neither does religion consist of some dogmas, rituals and customs. In fact, it is a complete way of life. It guides man

according to the dictates of Allah the Almighty received through His Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.. it is an all-embracing pattern and way of life, that does not leave out any aspect of human existence to be ruled corruptly by Satanic forces Islam stands for the establishment of the Law of the Almighty in His universe. The following are some of the main characteristics of Islam as a religion and a way of life.

A Complete Way of Life: A distinctive characteristic of Islam is that it is an organized, disciplined and complete way of life. It does not confine its scope only to the private life of a man, it caters for all the needs of human existence. Islam provides guidance in all walks of life – individual and social, material and moral, economic, national and international. The Qur'an enjoins man to enter the community of Islam without any reservation and to follow God's guidance in all walks of life.

A Balance between Individualism and Collectivism: Another unique feature of Islam is that it establishes a balance between individualism and collectivism. It believes in the individuality of man and holds everyone personally responsible and accountable to God. It guarantees fundamental rights to the individual and does not permit anyone to tamper with them. It makes the proper development of the personality of man as one of the prime objectives of its educational policy. It does not subscribe to the view that man must lose his individuality in the society or in the State. According to the Qur'an:

> "Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is in their hearts."   (13:11)
> "Man shall have nothing but what he strives for."   (53:39)

It also awakens a sense of social responsibility in man, organizes human beings in a society and a nation and enjoins the individual and the entire social organism to subscribe to the social good of all. In Islam, prayer is offered in congregation which results in social discipline among its followers. Everyone is enjoined to pay Zakat as laid down in the Qur'an: "In their wealth the beggar and the destitute have their due-right." (51:19). The Holy Prophet said: "He is not a believer who eats his fill while his neighbour starves." In short, Islam neglects neither the individual nor the society – it establishes harmony and balance between the two and assigns to each its proper role.

Unity of matter and sprit: A remarkable feature of Islam is that it does not divide life into water-tight compartments of matter and spirit. It regards life as a unity. It stands not for life-denial but for life-fulfillment. Islam does not believe in asceticism. It does not ask man to avoid or ignore material things. It holds that spiritual elevation is to be achieved by living honestly the rough and tumble of life, and not by renouncing the world. The Qur'an advises us to pray as follows:

> "Our Lord! Give us good in this world and good in the next world and protect us from the punishment of the Fire."   (2:201)
> Islam's injunction is:
> "Eat and drink*, but do not be excessive."   (7:31)
> The Holy Prophet said:

"Keep fast and break it (at the proper time) and stand in prayer and devotion (in the night) and have sleep – for your body has a right over you; your eyes have a right over you, and the person who pays a visit to you has a right over you."

Universalism and Humanism: The message of Islam is for the entire human race. God, according to Islam, is the Lord of all the worlds (Qur'an, 1:1) and the Prophet is a Messenger for the whole of mankind. In the words of the Qur'an: "O people! I am the Messenger of God to you all," (7:158); and, "A Warner to all the nations," (25:1); and, "We have not sent you except as a mercy for all the nations." (21:107). In Islam all men are equal, whatever their colour, language, race or nationality may be. It addresses the conscience of humanity and banishes all false barriers of race, status and wealth. There can be no denying the fact that such barriers have always existed, and do exist even today in this so-called enlightened age. The practice of Islam removes all these impediments and gives reality to the idea of all humanity being one family of God. The Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, said:

"All creatures of God form the family of God, and he is the best loved of God who best loves His creatures."

A Revealed Religion: The fundamental characteristic of Islam is that it is not a man-made system but the one revealed by the Creator Himself.

Simplicity, Rationalism and Practicality: Islam is a religion without any mythology. Its teachings are simple and intelligible and they appeal to human reason. It is free from superstitions and irrational beliefs and dogmas. The Unity of God, the Prophet hood of Muhammad, peace, be upon him, and the acceptance that there is a life-after-death are the basic articles of its faith. They are based on reason, sound logic, and recognition. All the teachings of Islam follow from these basic beliefs and are simple to comprehend and straightforward to follow. In Islam there is no hierarchy of priests, no far-fetched abstractions, no complicated rites and rituals. Everybody is able to approach the Book of God directly and to live his life in accordance with its guidance.

The Status of Women: From the material as well as the spiritual point of view Islam recognizes the position of women to be similar to that of men. The position of the mother is very much exalted in Islam. The Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said: "Paradise lies at the feet of the mother." As regards the position of a woman as a wife, the Holy Prophet said categorically 'The best among you is the one who is best towards his wives."

 In democratizing societies, especially, in contemporary Africa, tensions between religious groups are never purely religious. Religious tensions are usually an aspect of either ideological conflict between militants and moderates, racial conflict between white and black, ethno-cultural conflict between different African tribes and communities or class conflict between the haves and have-nots. (Mazrui, 1980, 1981) These trends have affected the faith of Islam since the 1970s – the politicization of Islam, the petrolisation of Islam and the plutoniumisation of Islam (Mazrui, 1980). The first concerned the rise of greater political consciousness in the Muslim world; the second concerned the emergence of petro-power as

an important ingredient in the fortunes of Islam; and the third concerned the potentialities of Muslim nuclear Power in the combat arena of world politics. The advent of Islam in Nigeria is connected in its beginnings with the history of West Africa which is commonly referred to by early historians and geographers of the area as **Bilad-us-Sudan.** To writers such as Al-Bakri, Yaqut and al-Maqrizi, the **Bilad-us-Sudan,** Country of the Black, extends from the western boundary of Africa adjacent to the Atlantic up to the present Republic of the Sudan. Islam entered Nigeria from two directions: from the North into Kanem-Bornu, the area which forms the present Borno State of Nigeria; and from the west into parts of the present Sokoto, Kaduna and Kano States of Nigeria. In both directions, it followed the caravan trade routes that existed from North Africa through the Sahara into the Western and Central Sudan. The religion and culture of Islam have been and still are very important in shaping the thinking and outlook of millions of Nigerians particularly in the Northern States of the country as well as in Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, Edo and Delta States just a few in the Southern part of the federation and the 36 States. Continent wise, Africa still possesses over 50% Muslims. Besides, of the approximately over 700 millions adherents of Islam world-wide there are approximately over 50 million Muslims in the People's Republic of China, over 80 million in India, over 45 million in the former USSR, over 100 million each in Pakistan and Indonesia, and the rest in the Arab countries of the Middle East (Asia and North Africa), Iran, Afghanistan, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, the Philippines, Albania, former Yugoslavia and other Balkan and European countries (both eastern) and North and South America (Olayiwola, 1988, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1996, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012).

ISLAM AND POLITICS IN NIGERIA

Religious affiliation has been a very serious problem for communication and politics in Nigeria. In fact, religion has often been made to serve as an effective vehicle for both the communication and realization of political ambitions. Issues that affect Muslims – the Shariah, the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), the holy pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina (Hajj), and question of Muslim rights in the Constitution – in the past as well as the present have been often treated with levity, derision, and contempt by the media, most of which are dominated by Christians. In the same vein, one or two Nigerian media that have Muslims on their editorial boards retaliate by being critical of anything Christian. Religious crises were/ are still becoming so rampant in the country. Nigeria's Muslims easily constitute the largest Muslim community in sub-Saharan Africa. In many of Nigeria's 36 States, including Lagos and the new capital territory Abuja, Muslims are a majority. Although Muslims are in majority, the country since independence has been governed by its rulers – Muslim as well as non-Muslim-and its intellectual and business elite as if it were a non-Muslim country. The symbols and trappings of state; the style of diplomacy; the direction of foreign policy; the political, legal, economic, and education systems; and the structures of the working week are all based on a western, secular, albeit once Christian, model. At these and other levels, Muslims see a clear continuity between the old colonial state and the "new" Nigeria in which they, the largest group in the country, are supposed to participate actively without attempting to change or restructure it along Islamic lines.

Rumor, rhetoric, and misinformation aside, there is nothing in the Muslim demands that support the more alarmist, non-Muslim interpretation of them, nor is there anything any Muslim-led Nigerian administration has done that would lend credence to such an interpretation (Clarke 1988). In the case of the Nigerian civil war (1967-70) the North was identified with Islam while 'Biafra' (or the East) was identified with Christianity. In reality the Nigeria civil war was mainly ethnic – but Biafra's public relations machinery successfully created the impression among many westerners that Ibo Christians were fighting a war in deference of Christianity. In spite of the fact that General Yakubu Gowon, the then head of the Federal Government of Nigeria, was a Christian, and much of his support came from other non-Muslims, Biafra brilliantly managed to suggest that a *Jihad* was being waged against the Ibo. Even the Vatican seemed for a while to have bought that version. (Mazirui, 1980). The cultural differences primarily exemplified in the make-up of the country have been a challenging dilemma, particularly as it concerns the religious dichotomy: the Islamic north versus the Christian south; a population division that is almost equal in the country (Onwukike, 1997). Religion has been a fundamental part of the Nigerian electoral process for as long as can be recalled. Although the country is supposed to be secular, it is hard to separate the impact of the two main religious groups and at times of election, rivalry and suspicion are heightened.

Muhammed Ali, a defeated Federal House of Representatives candidate for the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) in the 2003 elections in the northern state of Kaduna, asserts that religion played a big role in politics. The then ANPP presidential candidate, General Muhammad Buhari (rtd), recognizing that his opponents were prepared to use religion for political gains, asked voters to vote for "upright God fearing leaders during the campaigns because Buhari was fearful of religion and islamization in the country". The party is known for its conservative and Islamic appeal. However, according to Muhammed Ali, ANPP lost votes because "there existed a lot of police intimidation in the voting process in northern Nigeria". Mr Ali further alleged that the "International Republican Institute and the Nigerian Labour Congress were not fair election observers because they overlooked gross irregularities and had very few people on the ground" (Oshodi, 2007). Reports from international observers assert that religious difference in Nigeria is becoming more acute (Iwuchukwu, 2003). The Nigerian elites often see themselves as the defenders of their respective faith against other groups and, in many cases, manipulate the faithful for their own ends. Politicization of religion is, however, apparent in both the north and the south; some northern state governments introduced Sharia law, which debatably was the peculiar reaction of a segment of the Northern elite to the enthronement of a Southern-led democratic regime, and their resultant loss of privileges and desires to obtain local support. In addition, most of Nigerian heads of state and presidents have been northern Muslims, and this would obviously perplex the majority Christians of the South. With the inherent problem of mutual distrust associated with religion, it would be difficult for democracy to work confidently in Nigeria in the midst   of its weak democratic institutions.

In 2000, many killings were recorded from religious disturbances. From February 21 to 22, an estimated 3,000 people lost their livers in a clash between Muslims and Christians in

Kaduna, the capital of Kaduna State. There was a reprisal attack in Aba, Abia State and about 450 persons were killed. The riot was initially sparked up by the introduction of Islamic criminal law in some northern states. Also, from May 22 and 23, Kaduna was again brought to its knee when Muslims and Christians clashed. Over 300 lives were lost. In 2001, the religious clash between Muslims and Christians in Tafawa Balewa local government area of Bauchi State, which began on June 19 and ended on July 4, resulted in the death of over 100 persons. (Olukorede, 2002). In the fourth week of November 2002, religious violence rocked the city of Kaduna after an English newspaper, This Day, made a disparaging remark about Prophet Muhammad, P.B.O.H. The remark was made in the context of an international beauty pageant being staged in the country. Many Muslim organizations and some political leaders had objected to the holding of the miss world contest in Nigeria. Members of a militant Muslim group had gone on the rampage in Kaduna, targeting churches and private properties, a day after the report appeared. The rioting briefly spread to Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory; the newspaper had to tender an unconditional apology and the author of the article resigned. There was also a violent reaction from the minority groups. More than 200 people lost their lives and thousands were rendered homeless. (Cherian, 2002)

Plateau State is notorious for being a theater of war, as a result of frequent ethno-religious cases which are still happening up till today 2012. In the most recent one in July 2012, one Senator and one Majority Leader of a State House of Assembly were among the hundreds of people killed in the disturbances. Apart from massive killings of innocent people, there were systematic humiliation, wanton destruction and large scale displacement of people which had changed the sobriquet of Plateau from "Home of Peace and Tourism". Plateau 'war' started as a conflict between those that considered themselves the aborigines and their seemingly settlers over land like the Tiv/Jukun crisis. But in 2001, religious undertone crept in.   In September 2001, Jos experienced an eruption of violence, which was unprecedented. Between September 7 and 12, over 500 persons were killed. About 1,000 others were injured .Jos is still experiencing violence today 2012.

From September 2001 to date, crises between the settler Hausa/Fulani's and the natives had become a recurring decimal in the state. Examples abound: on February 23, 2004, Hausa/Fulani militants murdered about 48 persons in a Church. And May 2004, there were reprisal killings of many Muslims in Yelwa.. A reprisal attack over Yelwa incident in Kano State on May 2, 2004 led to the killings of non-indigenes by the Hausa ethnic militants. In the mayhem, more than 40 people were killed, several hundreds injured and over 30,000 people displaced, property valued at billions of Naira were either touched, vandalized or looted by the rioters who employed all manner of dangerous weapons during the attack. That of November 2008 was the worst ever before the 2012 massacres in various parts of Northern States and Plateau State. On 8 June 2004, religious violence erupted in Numan town, headquarters of Numan local government area, Adamawa State, leaving more than 17 persons dead and some worship centres destroyed. The violence was believed to be the climax of two weeks of tensed relations between the native Bacchama Christians and the local Muslim community over the location of the town's central mosque, a few yards away form the Bachama paramount ruler's palace. The reconstruction of the mosque, which was

destroyed during a similar religious clash in the town in 2003, had ignited passions among the native Christians who thought that building the mosque's minaret higher than the Hama Bachama's (Bachama paramount ruler) palace was an assertion of dominance in the town (Shobayo, 2002, Murray and Ajose, 2004).

RELIGIOUS ISSUES IN THE NIGERIAN DEMOCRATIZING SOCIETY: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE
From the foregoing analysis, it is crystal clear that there are religious issues in democratizing societies especially those of Africa. Our concern in this paper however has to do with the issues from the Islamic view point.

THE INTEREST FREE BANKING SYSTEM, THE ISLAMIC BANK
As it is operated in developed economies of Europe, America, Asia, Africa to mention just a few, attempts to open an interest free banking system for the benefits of people, Muslims, non Muslims including atheists, have been fiercely challenged by some Christians in Nigeria.

1. **Hajj – Holy Pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia – Makkah and Madina**.
Pilgrimage is the fifth pillar of Islam which is obligatory for healthy, pious, economically able Muslim men and women to perform. However, the Nigerian Christians in their jealousness and intolerance have asked the government for and got their Christian pilgrims boards to travel to Jerusalem in Israel.

2. **Mass Media Coverage of Islamic Matters**
The Nigerian and Western mass media mostly owned, controlled and dominated by Christians attack anything Islamic or Muslim.

3. **Islamic mode of Dressing**.
Islamic mode of dressing by Muslim men and women is attacked by Christians even though they use their own Christian symbol of the cross, among a host of others, in dressing etc.

4. **Blasphemy**
Islamic religion, the Book of Islam, the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad are always attacked by Christians and their agents in provocation.

5. **The Shariah – Islamic Law**
Muslims have a right to demand to undergo peculiar Islamic administration of justice, the Shariah. This is opposed by Christians even though, it does not apply to them.

6. **The Organization of Islamic Conference(OIC)**
The Muslims have a right or freedom of association as the Christians do exercise with their relation with international capitalist multi – national corporations, but they oppose Muslims to exercise same rights. For example, the Queen of England is the Head of the Commonwealth and she is also the Head of the Church of England; yet Nigeria is a member of the Commonwealth and the Nigerian Christians and Muslims as well do not oppose Nigeria's membership of the International Organization.

7. **The style of diplomacy, the direction of foreign policy,**
The political, economic, legal and educational systems as well as the working week structures are all based on western, secular, Christian models.

8. **The Stigma of terrorism**.
Muslims are not terrorists. There are terrorists all over the world, the IRA in Britain, the ETA in Spain etc., but the Christians attach the stigma to Muslims

9. Distortions about Islam
a. **J**ihad (The Holy War)
b. Prophet Isa (Jesus, Son of Mary)
c. Polygamy (Plurality of wives)
d. Marriage and Divorce
e. The status of women in Islam; among a host of other issues are the concerns of Muslims in the Nigerian democratizing society.
The Christians views on those issues do not represent what Islam stands for.
There are Qur'anic verses and prophetic sayings on the truth about those issues contrary to the erroneous, blatant lies, falsehood of some Christians about those matters but time and space do not permit us to discuss them further in this paper.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
This paper has discussed religious issues in a democratizing society taking Nigeria as an example and from the Islamic perspective. The paper makes the following recommendations:
1. An Islamic rule which operates Shariah will be the best suitable socio – politico – economic system for Nigeria.
2. Islamic political system had worked successfully in the Northern part of Nigeria around the 19th century before the advent of the British colonialists and imperialists who invaded the country. The people under the Shariah law enjoyed maximum security, peace and happiness.
3. The constitution of Nigeria needs to be urgently amended to make any religious harassment or incitement to religious or ethnic hatred, a criminal offence
4. Nigerians are advised to desist from opposing anything that would benefit the people on grounds of ethnicity and/or religion
5. Leaders in the legislative, executive and judicial arms of government must exercise genuine political will to serve in the interest of the people.
6. Religious and a host of other leaders should show excellent examples in their daily life – political, economic, social, national and international.
7. There is a need for the active participation of all Muslims, men and women, young and old, in the politics, economy and Nigerian societal affairs – nationally and internationally with the fear of God
8. There is a need to establish a Muslim Media Centre for Communication and Information Dissemination to educate, inform the people about the true Islam and Muslims way of life
9. The massacre of Muslims in occupied lands of the Palestinians by the Jews of Israel and other parts of the world, including the Nigerian business, Israel contractors, the double standard of the so – called United Nations Organisation that is increasingly becoming a disunited Nations Organization and the indifferent attitude of the Commonwealth of Nations where the wealth is not common, should stop. Also, the collective attacks of the Governments of America, Britain and other Western Powers against Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, and other Muslim Arab Countries for allegedly attempting to develop Nuclear power/weapon should stop. After all, Israel has nuclear power/weapons which it uses against the Palestinians and Muslims in their own lands which the Israel

occupied and took over by force; and these American and British Governments have not condemned Israel for the massacre of Muslims and the Arabs.

10. There is the need for the federal government to make the teaching and learning of the three religions compulsory in primary institutions as well as making it compulsory to be part of General Studies in our Universities. This will enable the adherents of the religions to benefit from one another's religious beliefs and use such benefits for the solution of our social, political, religious and economic problems.

11. There is the need for the federal government to ban the mass media from carrying sensitive, negative, insulting, one -sided or critical religious items whether in form of paid advertisement or coverage gratis.

12. There is the need for the Federal government to hold regular meetings with religious leaders as media briefings are held with media executives. At such meetings, the government will be able to remind religious leaders to educate their followers on the programmes, plans, policies and activities of government, ensure that their adherents maintain the best image befitting their religions in their actions and behaviour and make constant passionate appeal to them to support the political, social and economic programmes of the government so as to achieve social harmony, peaceful coexistence, economic and political stability now and in the future.

13. Nigeria must convene a constitutional conference based on the collective national resolve to make Nigeria work. An association must be beneficial to all its members before it can be worthwhile, and power- holders must stop regarding the groaning of its victims as ingratitude or mere complaints.

14. The application of the principle of federal character must be revised. It must give succor to the poor, the weak, the marginalized, the down-trodden, the wretched of the earth, and limit the power of the strong.

15. The constitutional provisions on political, economic, social, educational and other objectives must be enforced.

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