ROLES OF MUSLIMS IN THIS PRESENT POLITICAL DISPENSATION: BEING A PAPER DELIVERED AT KWARA STATE POLYTECHNIC, ILORIN FOR THE MUSLIM STUDENTS ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA ON 15TH MARCH, 2003:BY YUSUF O. ALI ESQ; SAN

Bismillathi ar Rahman, ar-Raheem. Asalamu Alaykum waramotullahi wabarakatuhu.

May I sincerely before commencing this lecture thank Almighty Allah for giving us the opportunity to be here today and at the same time thank the organizers of this lecture for their initiative especially when the year 2003 general elections is around the corner.

ISLAMIC NOTION OF POLITICS AS COMPARED TO THAT OF EUROPEAN PHILOSOPHERS

There is no doubt that Islam as a religion recognises politics and enjoins muslims to take part in it. However unlike most European political philosophers who draw a line of demarcation between politics (man's management) and morality and consider the two irreconciliably incompatible and therefore refer to it (politics) sometime as a game, without qualification, and sometimes qualified as dirty. Islam does not see it in any of those spectra but as a trust. Politics in Islam means realization and protection of the general welfare of mankind and that muslims who partake in it must accept to work diligently day and night and therefore accept to suffer physically and intellectually, all with a view to pleasing Allah and serving humanity so as to win the favour of Allah not ephemeral popularity. Thus Shari'ah and the exemplary conduct of the rightly guided Khulafa, Umar Ibn Abdual Azeez inclusive, as well as the worthy ancestors should be his guiding light.

ROLES AS ELECTORATES

There is no gain saying the fact the bad leaders are elected by the good electorates who failed or refused to partake in the electioneering processes, thereby paving ways for bad electorates to elect bad leaders.

What could be inferred from the above saying is that good muslims should make sure they take part in electing their leaders so that good leaders will be elected to govem their affairs. With this, I implore my Muslim brothers and sisters not to sit on the fence

Thus, they should join political parties whose ideologies are in conformity with Islamic politics with a view to brining in Islamic political ideologies and achieve the desired achievements.

ROLES AS POLITICAL OFFICE HOLDING ASPIRANTS

In all political organizations, power no doubt is the ultimate goal. Unfortunately, the democratic concept that powers belongs to the people is misleading, because in Islam all powers belong to Allah and man holds it in trust for Allah.

According to the Prophet (PBUH) powers belongs to Allah alone.

The Holy Qur'an asserts as follows

"Whoever desires power than to Allah belongs the mighty wholly".

This shows that all power belongs to Almighty Allah. Therefore, whoever finds himself in any position of authority at any level must take it as a trust from Allah. This indicates that all muslisms and non muslims alike must know that whenever they are aspiring to become political leaders, they must not take it as a do or die affair as our political aspirants/leaders are taking it, now.

There are some prophetic traditions that even discourage people from aspiring to be political leaders unless they are chosen to be.

For instance Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) is reported to have said:

"Be an Imam/leader if you are appointed"

Another prophetic tradition says

"Don't seek for a position because if you seek for it and appointed. they will abandon you, but if you are appointed or selected, they will assist you and rally round you and God will also support you,"

The prophetic traditions quoted above are very simple and clear and the contents therein should serve as a lesson for all the political office aspirants that Almighty Allah and His Apostle enjoined them not to seek for political positions because if they do, they will certainly not be supported by God, but if they allow themselves to be

chosen by their people, certainly these people who have genuinely chosen them and the Almighty Allah will support them.

ROLES AS POLITICAL LEADERS

This pat of the lecture is the most important area because it will reveal what our political leaders' status should look like and what they are expected to be doing and the consequences if they abide or do not abide by it.

It has been said earlier on that political power is a trust that shall not be desecrated under any circumstances. We may wish to see Qur'an 4.58 which says:

"Lo! Allah commandeth you that ye restore deposits to their owners, and, if ye judge between mankind, that ye judge justly Lo! Comely is this which Allah admonisheth you. Lo! Allah is ever Hearer, Seer for this. "

Furthermore it must also be noted that political power affects humanity, the animal kingdom and vegetable kingdom and that anything that deals with the fate or welfare of another shall be treated with utmost care. This is because all action of man great or small is recorded and he will sometime in the hereafter be confronted with it for accountability. We may wish to see Qur'an 2:53.

This Qur'anic verse however depicts the mission of the prophet as a source of mercy to mankind. Any muslim therefore, particularly a leader is required in his leadership to copy the exemplary life of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH).

This political view also represents two, among many, prophetic sayings on leadership. The Prophet is reported to have stated that whoever is in charge of the affairs of the Muslims will be betraying the trust of Allah and that of His messenger if he appoints a person over the management of their affairs at the expense of a more competent one.

The Prophet is also reported to have said:

> *"Expect an enournous confusion, end of the World,*
> *whenever trust is neglected."*

However when the Prophet was asked as to the meaning of negligence of trust, the Prophet, peace be upon him, interpreted it to mean giving appointment to an incompetent person. A muslim leader therefore is expected and enjoined throughout his tenure to aim at the protection and development of not only human society, (muslims and non muslims alike) but those of terrestrial and marine creatures.

Anybody who by God's grace is made a political leader must therefore know that he is the reflection and heart of society he leads, and that once the heart is pure and sound the body to which it is attached will invariably be sound. Our political leaders are however enjoined to lead exemplary life.

The political leaders are urged to act justly even to their enemies, for doing so, according to the Holy Prophet is one of the most eloquent proof of their piety. Quran 5.8 makes provision for this when it says:

"Do not allow your hatred for others to turn you away from justice. Act justly towards all; justice is nearer to true pelty."

The Prophet Muhammed in his support for the above is also reported to have stated that:

"A just leader is most loved by Allah, and a tyranmical leader is most hated by Allah."

He is also reported to have said that:

"A single day of a just leader is indeed much better in the sight of Allah than a worship of sixty years."

The Holy Prophet did not stop at this, he is reported also to have said:

"He who unsheathes the sword of oppression/injustice, the sword of victory will be unsheathed against him and he is bound to face ignominy."

There is a report in Sahih Muslim, on the authority of A'ishat, the wife of the prophet that the prophet (PBUH) says:

"Oh my lord! He who is appointed over the management of the affairs of my community and then he treats them with

harshness, be harsh on him my lord!"

These and other unquoted copious authorities that encourage justice on one hand and discourage in-justice on the other hand are telling our leaders to be fastidious in both their theoretical and practical attempts to help establish justice and maintain it in the land.

For instance these authorities enjoin our political leaders to probe either by themselves or by those whom their powers are delegated the activities of erring judges and of state functionaries involved or suspected to be involved in misdeeds as this will make others feel and know that a vigilant eye is kept on their movements and activities and they will therefore sit up.

The Quran and Prophetic admonitions to our leaders is simply that they should make justice their watch words and that a just leader should therefore have the following qualities and exhibit same so that they will be upright in their dealings with the ruled.

1. Utterance of the words of affirmation
2. Prayer in favour of the Prophet even if once in his life.
3. Speaking the truth.
4. Insistence on dispensation of justice equitably and justly in the state and;
5. Pursuit of the principles of persuading people to be of good conduct and dissuading them from corrupt practices for the betterment of the life of the whole society.

Once any of these is neglected by the leader, corruption of all types and dimensions will spread. The wordly and religious matters will be entangled and the world will be in trouble.

Our political leaders are equally enjoined to understand that there is no separation between religious and worldly affairs. That is the two in Islam are indivisible. This goes to say that both religious and worldly matters are ruled, controlled and regulated by Islamic legislations.

Our leaders should know that Islam enters into all facets of life of the muslims and the state and determines what they should be and how they should be.

Therefore our political rulers or leaders are enjoined to know that Allah, most High retains sovereignty in Himself and thus makes all, both the ruler and the ruled, equal before the laws, and that none including the rulers can claim immunity.

Finally our political leaders must always consider themselves as trustees of any of the positions they hold and that they are accountable to both the electorates and Almighty Allah Who is the judge of all judges.

CONCLUSION

In concluding this lecture, the summary of all I have been saying is that muslims have roles to play in the present political dispensation as electorates and parties flag bearers which may eventually make them elected leaders. Muslims are however enjoined that while participating actively, they should not forget what Islam says and the duties expected by Allah must be satisfactorily performed to please their people and the Almighty Allah who has imposed these on them by making justice their watchword.

Maa salam.