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EDITORIAL

All praise is to Allah, Whom we thank and seek for His help and forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evils of ourselves and the burden of our evil deeds. Whomsoever He guides, will never be misled, and whomsoever He misguides, will never find enlightenment. I testify that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, and that Mohammad is His slave and Messenger.

Our thanks and gratitude goes to Allah (SWT) for enabling us to produce the first issue of the thirteenth volume of the newsletter. May we all benefit from its contents, ameen.

We have been following with keen interest the developments surrounding the composition of the leadership and membership of the National Political Reform Conference. We applaud the efforts of organisations such as NACOMYO under the leadership of Alhaji Ishaq kunle Sani and the Supreme Council for Shariah Implementation in Nigeria under the leadership of Alhaji Datti Ahmed over the issue. We also read with dismay the attitude of the President towards the delegates of the Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), led by the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammadu Maccido.

It is encouraging to note that the NSCIA is meeting on Monday 28 March to review their encounter with the President as well as the President's subsequent response. We sincerely hope that the outcome of the meeting will help in determining the next course of action for the Muslims, ameen.

NIGERIA AND THE PARABLE OF A SINKING SHIP

Introduction

It is often strange to attempt to study and analyze social/national issues from a religious point of view. This, as believed by many people today should be left to the secular social sciences. Social theories therefore, have always been invoked in intellectual and professional circles, as the only effective tools/frameworks in analyzing social phenomena. This of course, is as a result of the predominance of secularism. Religion has been divorced from or rather marginalized in public life, and is therefore rarely seen or even employed as a basis for studying and understanding social issues and problems. This undue privileging of secularism has been the bane of our problem in this country, and indeed the whole of humanity today. This write-up adopts as its major approach, the invocation of religious perspective in its analyses of issues as they happen in Nigeria and the world at large.

Because we have largely been assaulted by secular ideas and mentality, the tendency is always in us to think that religious texts contain only instructions regarding faith and rituals. Certainly, this is a misconception. Religion is supposed to guide all aspects of our life. Hence, in religious sayings and precepts, there abound lessons that have direct bearing on our social life. One example of these is a saying of the Prophet (SAW) in which he describes the society as a ship that sails on a high sea. This saying really is, as may be ordinarily thought, a mere instruction about the need to enjoin goodness and forbid wrong-doing in the society. While this is actually the case, it is however necessary to think deeper on the philosophical imports of that saying

and its implications in nation building and social survival. It is for this reason that this saying of the Prophet (SAW) is hereby adopted as the framework for analyzing the problems of this country, and searching for a rescue urgently, lest the ship sinks.

Parable of the Sinking Ship

In this parable the Prophet (SAW) projects the society in form of a ship on high waters. The ship he says has two layers – the lower and upper. It is however constructed in such a way that, for the people in the lower layer, if they need water for drinking, they have to follow a route that passes through the upper layer. Feeling overburdened and over tasked by this long and perhaps difficult route, they met and decided that it would be easier for them to create a hole on the floor (i.e. the bottom) of the ship so that instead of having to always go up all through they could now get water for their use through the hole. At this point the Prophet (SAW) warns that the ship will certainly and ultimately sink and the people of both the lower and upper layers will automatically get drowned, unless the latter prevent the former from creating that hole. If we have to think over the lessons of this parable, two important things become obvious and clear. These are:

1. The necessity and importance of law enforcement;
2. Good and responsible leadership in the society.

Those in the upper layer of the ship symbolise the leaders in the society comprising of elders, scholars and the men of authority. Stopping the people of the lower layer of the ship (i.e. the

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followers/masses in the case of the society) from creating a hole symbolises the enforcement of law and order or the supremacy of the rule of law. In any society where the leaders are insensitive, or not responsive and worst of all corrupt, that society faces doom. Just like in the case of the people of the upper layer of the ship, if as the Prophet (SAW) said, they failed to stop those of the lower layer from wrecking down the ship, everybody would perish. That is a failure to enforce the law and maintain order in the society. The society would, in this kind of situation, be self-destroyed. There would be insecurity, anarchy, chaos and all sorts of pandemonium.

If we apply this saying of the Prophet (SAW) to the Nigerian situation, we would realize that the ship is already on the verge of sinking. With the way the Nigerian society is drifting, this has become very imminent. For a long time, in fact since independence, except for a few exemplary and exceptional cases, the nation has been unlucky, having bad leadership. In most cases one can say we have been having leaders who can simply, and perhaps safely too, be described as people that are given to evil-doing, perversion and vanities. The masses are no better than the leaders. They admire such leaders that were once their oppressors, because they offer them token amounts to solve their immediate problems. They soon forget the evils of those people and hail them more than the people of integrity and discipline, whom they often despise.

The Nigerian society as was said by one writer has been devastated by a different kind of war not the type that was launched against Iraq. Unlike

the kind of weapons of mass destruction Iraq was accused of possessing, ours is corruption. It is the weapon that has destroyed our society massively.

When the military was handing over in May, 1999 many Nigerians were full of hopes for a brighter future. The military it was thought had ravaged the country and had wantonly stolen and embezzled all its wealth. The hopes of Nigerians were all the more raised by the inaugural speech of the new President Olusegun Obasanjo. He vowed to disarm the nation of its weapon of mass destruction-corruption.

Unfortunately and sadly too, Obasanjo only succeeded in catapulting the nation to the second position in the world, in the ranks of the most corrupt nations. Glimpses of Obasanjo's weakness in fighting corruption started showing and became very glaring in the first PDP national convention after his election in 1999, which saw the emergence of Gemade as the PDP national chairman. The Ghana-must-gos that went round during the convention, which of course, were dished out to defeat of principled contestants like Chief Sunday Awoniyi and his supporters, was the first evidence of the insincerity of his regime in fighting corruption and fraud. From then on, the drift continued, taking different shapes and dimensions. The situation of the country in terms of security, power supply and energy, water supply, availability of fuel, inflation control, good education, adequate healthcare facilities and almost everything became worst than the military days. Even when the general elections were fast approaching there were no improvements. Some of the problems like fuel scarcity in fact worsened. The government lost all reasonable explanations because it had none, except crying foul where there was none.

The general elections of 2003 were seen as a source of succor. Again, sadly enough, the events that took place made the situation looked even more dismal, bleak, sordid, and disastrous. What happened was the mother of all evils. It

was an electoral terrorism. Or to put it mildly, it was an electoral robbery, as was succinctly put by the renowned human rights lawyer, activist and presidential aspirant of the NCP-Chief Gani Fawehinmi. The events of the April 2003 general elections and especially the presidential elections were just unfortunate. The monumental and callous fraud in the elections, even as testified by both foreign and local observers, not only the opposition, have only thrown this country into a path of doom and perdition. The hopes of Nigerians have terribly been dashed and if we have to refer to our frame of analysis, i.e. The Prophetic parable, the ship one can say is at the brink of sinking. This precarious situation immediately raises the question as to who will rescue the ship from sinking?

In an attempt to answer this question, one does not intend to point at any single individual, *for* as it is obvious no one person can on his/her own solve the problem. He has to work with a team. This therefore, necessitates looking towards some groups or classes of people in the society.

Rescuing the Sinking Ship

As has been pointed out earlier, our attempt to suggest rescue for the sinking ship shall focus on particular groups in the society. These groups will be examined, to determine their potentialities and abilities in rescuing our ship in the present dispensation and circumstances of the nation.

Elders/traditional rulers

In a common parlance it is often said that the words of elders are the words of wisdom. This is because of the experiences they (the elders) must have gone through in life. The traditional rulers are the fathers of our respective local communities, and thus, invariably fathers of the nation. It is expected that, as the nation drifts, our traditional rulers and elders would come to our rescue by cautioning the leaders, reprimanding them in some ways and or giving the right kind of advice, and intervening in some difficult situations. Sadly however, an average Nigerian does not trust these people; neither does he/she have any

confidence in them as a group. This is because of the postures they always take towards successive regimes in the country—the good, the bad, and the ugly. They are usually praise singers of all regimes and in some cases they collaborate with some political office holders to perpetrate inequities and deprive and oppress their very masses (talakawa). They are no better than political prostitutes. For all these reasons, the masses hardly think of any succor from them. A few of them however, to be fair, have maintained their honour, integrity and respect. But these are very insignificant indeed to mobilise the rest into playing a meaningful role that may bring the desired change in the society.

Politicians

In Nigeria politics is the dirtiest game. Nigerian politicians except very few indeed join politics purely for personal aggrandisement. Serving the people is not in their dictionary except as a gimmick. In the last four years for example, the nation went through unprecedented experiences of corruption, fraud, thievery, embezzlement and financial indiscipline. Of all the prominent political office holders hardly can anyone point to a single person amongst them as a model of good governance, disciplined leadership and transparency, without any fear of contradiction. The nation, in the last four years was ruined and all rays of hope have been put off by the atrocities of the last general elections. Undoubtedly, the politicians as a class in this country are the very people that are out to destroy our ship, and perhaps even quickly paddle it towards dangerous waters. We do not expect them to come to the rescue of the nation, as far as their prevailing actions are concerned.

The Military

If there were any particular group of people that can be accused of putting the nation in its present predicaments, it is the military. Often they intervene with the usual pretensions that they were coming to rescue the nation from collapsing. While in 1983 they told us that, our hospitals were in shambles and had been turned to mere consulting clinics, when however they were handing over power in 1999, the hospitals were not only worse than how they met them but were no better than morgues. The mis-governance of the military, except for exceptional, though short lived cases, has made it impossible to rate their respective regimes above those of the politicians. In fact, the military can not be exonerated because, having held the mantle of leadership for most of the times since independence, they must share the greater part of the blame for all the problems this country has found itself in. The years covering 1983-1999 have been the longest stretch of military rule, but 1985-1999 was the time when corruption reached its peak and really became almost institutionalised in this country. As far as the records of the military in government are concerned, we do not see any rescue coming from them. In fact we do not pray for their coming back.

Professionals /Technocrats

All respective military and civilian regimes have always taken this class of people into trust and confidence. They involve them in policy formulation, or in some cases even make them the architects of such policies. With their different professional bodies, they are often seen as the cream of the society and its torchbearers. Their respective ethical codes when read present reflections of egalitarianism, altruism, and uprightness. Many Nigerians look up to them for redemption. Unfortunately, our professionals in all their callings have largely not lived up to the ethics of their jobs. In government circles they abandon all their principles and ethics in order to maintain their seats, dancing to the tunes of their mentors, at the expense of their professions and indeed the Nigerian

masses. In fact even outside the corridors of power, professionals in Nigeria have been seen to throw morality and professional integrity to the dogs, when aping for favours and or political appointments. Just imagine the professors and PhDs that can shamelessly face the world (through international press conferences) and tell blatant lies or dismiss clear facts about election results because of their selfish interests. Just imagine accountants that connive with government officials to loot public treasuries. Think of lawyers and judges that allow themselves to be muzzled or influenced by 'executives'. When shall we have sanity and patriotism in our national and official endeavors? With this situation, do we expect any rescue from our professionals?

Workers/Civil Servants

In modern societies, the workers constitute a distinct community within the general society, and indeed they are a force to be reckoned with. Workers have been the vanguard of change and resistance as the case may be. In multi-party democracies the labor parties have always been seen to represent the interest of the common man-fellow workers, peasants and the destitute in the society. Through their respective trade unions, or in some cases by means of coalition, workers have in many countries in the world resisted harsh government policies that are detrimental and glaringly oppressive to the masses. They constitute a powerful pressure group and have always potently played the watchdogs in the society.

In Nigeria the story is different. The civil service has been the engine of corruption. Workers in government ministries, parastatals, commissions and departments have not only been the tools by which fraud is perpetrated, but have in fact been its experts. They teach every incoming, unsuspecting officer that comes newly to head their respective departments/offices, the techniques of fraud and double-dealing in office.

When we review the history of labour struggle in the country we are presented with a bleaker and more hopeless

situation. Only in very few exceptional cases like ASUU, hardly had labour leaders fought doggedly and steadfastly to protect or procure the rights of their members. Like the traditional rulers, the 'comrades' have always played the prostitutes/sycophants, abandoning their colleagues halfway in the struggle. That is the major reason why labour struggle has always been ineffective in the country. The best the Nigerian workers can do is just organise march-past on the May Day where they shout 'aluta continua' and sing labour songs. The nation does not expect any rescue from such a workforce that hardly resists temptations and or remains un-swayed in the path of struggle for justice in the society.

The Youth

The hope of all nations rests on the shoulders of its youth. If the youth of a nation are visionary and spirited, it would not fear extinction. This has been the case throughout human history. The youth are the bastion of political might and sovereignty, the source of economic development and prosperity and the vanguard of social change and reform. In our search for national salvation, it is necessary to look up to the youth. Throughout history, religious movements, political struggles, military campaigns, social activism and so on have always mobilised, utilised and relied on the youth for their success.

In Nigeria today, a critical look at the condition of our youth presents a heart-breaking picture. One can ex-ray this condition of the youth in various perspectives. The greatest problem that faces our youth today is the absence of good vision in life. A large portion of our youth hardly

understands and appreciates the meaning, purpose and value of life. This is a direct result of the collapse of our education system. While it is safe to say that more than two-third (2/3) of our youth do not acquire reasonable amount of education and skill training, those opportuned to attend school hardly come out with the desired/adequate level of moral and professional training. What does a society expect of a youth it has neglected, and has thus, been exposed to all sorts of social vices? What does a society expect of a youth that has been consumed by indolence, and therefore, knows nothing except pimperling, begging, prostitution, mediocrity and dependence? The problems are uncountable. The other face of it is that, such a teeming youth that is uneducated and skillless is the one that is easily induced and or conscripted into violence of all sorts. Rather than rehabilitation of such unfortunate youth population, today's Nigerian politicians only exploit them, endanger their lives and therefore, aggravate their misfortune. This is perhaps, the greatest disservice the present politicians are doing to our society.

In another perspective, if one critically looks at the so-called educated youth no sigh of relief would come to him. The lesser quality of the education they receive has made them largely uncreative and unproductive. The most conspicuous mark of the Nigerian educated youth today is opportunism and sycophancy. The society has been inundated with this youth movement or forum; that youth association or congress, and so on. These youth groups have not made any impact in the society in terms of really improving the condition of the common man. They are vehicles by means of which undue privileges, favours, and opportunities are obtained. Every incumbent leader/politician has one or more youth supporter-group. Here one may recall the organisers of the three million march in March of 1998, and the various youth campaign organisations for all the incumbents in the present republic. We have not seen up to this moment, a really forceful, principled, visionary and steadfastly enduring youth movement in

the country. The future is really gloomy with the present crop of youth.

The so-called new breed politicians have been all the more destructive to this country! Although the political field today can be said to be hosting both the old and new breeds, it is expected that the new breeds, in their respective capacities would show a difference. Alas, they are the worst crop of politicians. Consider the national and state assemblies. What are they doing when the executives are perpetrating all these monumental corruptions and frauds? Are they not largely young men and women in these legislative houses? What have they done to protect or promote the rights and interests of their electorates? These are the Nigerian young men and women for us.

The Clergy - Religious Leaders/Scholars

It is not unintentional that I left discussion on this group to be last in the series so far examined. This is because religious scholars and leaders are supposed to be the last resort for the common man. As men of God, they have been ordained and charged to lead the struggle for justice, equity, and moral rectitude in the society. When Allah tells us about the inequities of the Jews regarding the taking of usury, eating unlawful wealth and general over-indulgence, He charged immediately saying: "Why do the rabbis and religious scholars not forbid them from saying what is sinful and devouring what is unlawful? How wretched is what they have been practicing?" (Qur'an, 5:63).

This means that when the society is heading towards perdition and doom, it is expected in the last resort, to be redeemed and salvaged by the men of God. In Nigeria today one wonders if there were no such men of God. Why are things worsening by the day while nobody speaks? Why are the leaders becoming more corrupt, vain and even more vicious and merciless? Undoubtedly the Nigerian society is fast drifting towards total perdition, and we are compelled to ask again: Where are the men of God? Can't we have either among the Muslim or Christian scholars those who will emulate Moses, Jesus or

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in their respective condemnation and repulsion of oppression, injustice and evildoing?

Again in the same vein we may still ask, can't we have the likes of Shiekh Usman dan Fodio among the Muslims or Martin Luther among the Christians? Where are the Nana Asmau's, and or Mother Therasas, in terms of compassion, selflessness, philanthropy, and altruism, among the women religious activists of our today's Nigeria?

The reality of our situation in Nigeria is that, our religious leaders and scholars have been part and parcel of the oppressive class and regimes. Whether Muslim or Christian scholars and leaders, just take a .visit to any of the governrnent houses in all the states and you would see how these 'men of God' saunter around, or gate crash to find ways to his/her Excellencies to seek for one favor or the other. In their presence, these their Excellencies commit atrocities and transgressions but they cannot advise them because that is simply not what took them there. Whenever any religious scholar or leader attempts to raise an eyebrow on any matter, a gratuitous number of flight tickets to either Israel or Makkah can pacify him or rather tame him. This may be besides the flashy cars, plots of lands in strategic places in the city, on the pretense of establishing 'religious centre or institutions' or some relatively huge amount of monetary gratifications. When all these happen, their Excellencies can then continue to loot, plunder and even kill in the eyes of the 'men of God', with impunity. The sad thing about this ugly situation is that with the hypocritical silence of our religious leaders, goodness has

almost been turned to sin and evil, while the reverse is also being rapidly entrenched in the society. Devilish people who are perverse in all standards of the word have not only had the opportunity of easily emerging as leaders in the society but are similarly becoming celebrities. These so-called religious leaders in fact hardly command any respect in the eyes of the corrupt politicians. Having humiliated themselves before them while looking for favors, the politicians are never scared, frightened, or even perturbed by their presence. They do not in any way see them as threats to be reckoned with. One may wish to ask, where were our religious leaders who should have spoken to protect the fearless and courageous Acting Auditor-General of the Federation who exposed the wanton corruption in government? Where are our men of God when many people are deprived of clean and portable drinking water and food?

Where are our religious scholars when the masses are suffering the hardships of artificial fuel scarcity because of the greed and selfish interest of a very few Nigerians? hy is it that the religious leaders have failed to intervene to save our education system from total collapse, and especially save the universities from decay? Do we therefore expect the ship to be rescued by the present crop of religious leaders and scholars? All these questions and the ones previously asked can not be answered easily, but they must be answered. However, a more important question that needs to be answered in face of this huge crisis of survival is: Should we then despair?

This is a Lecture by Dr Salisu Shehu (BUK) at the Inauguration of the ATBU (Bauchi) Muslim Forum, August, 2004.

KHADIJAH (RA) - MOTHER OF THE FAITHFUL

Khadijah (RA) was the first to bear witness that there is no god except Allah and that Muhammad (SAW) was the Messenger of Allah.

Khadijah, (RA) came from a noble family. Her father Khuwaylid had been one of the most honoured leaders of their tribe until he was killed in battle. Her husband had also died, leaving her a very wealthy woman. When the Prophet (SAW) was still a young man, she entrusted him with some of her wealth, asking him to trade with it in Syria on her behalf. He was already well known for his honesty, truthfulness and trustworthiness. He returned from Syria after having made a large profit for Khadijah (RA).

After hearing his account of the journey, she decided that he would make the best of the husbands, even though many of the most important nobles of the Quraish had already proposed to her and had been refused, and in due course she proposed to him.

After the Prophet's uncle, Abu Talib, had given the proposed marriage his blessing, Muhammad and Khadijah were married.

At the time of the marriage, the Prophet (SAW) was twenty-five years old, while Khadijah (RA) was forty years old.

For the next fifteen years they lived happily together, and Khadijah bore several children. Their first child, a son whom they named Qasim, died when he was only two years old. Another son called Tayyib (Abdullahi), was also born, but he too died in his infancy. However, the Prophet (SAW) and Khadijah (RA) also had four daughters who survived: Zaynab, Ruqayya, Umm Kulthum and Fatima.

No one except Allah of course, knows more about a man than his wife, both his good and his bad qualities, his strengths and his weaknesses. The more Khadijah came to know about her husband, the more she loved and respected him. Everyone in Makka called him 'al-Amin', which means 'the trustworthy one', and she, more than anyone else, knew how

fitting this name was. It became the Prophet's custom each year to spend the month of Ramadhaan in seclusion and reflection in a cave on the mountain of Hira, which is on the outskirts of Makkah. Khadijah (RA) would always make sure that he was provided with food and drink during his retreat.

Towards the end of one Ramadhaan, when he was forty and Khadijah (RA) fifty-five, Muhammad (SAW) suddenly appeared at their house in the middle of the night, trembling with fear and saying, "Cover me up, cover me up!"

Khadijah (RA) was very alarmed to see him in such a state. Quickly she wrapped a blanket around his shoulders and, when he had calmed down, she asked him to describe exactly what had happened. He told her how a being whom he had never seen before - in fact it was the angel Jibril - had suddenly appeared to him while he was asleep and had said, "Read!"

"But I cannot read," he had replied, for he was unlettered and could neither read or write. "Read!" the angel had repeated, clasping Muhammad close to his chest. "I cannot read," he had repeated. "Read!" the angel had repeated, firmly embracing him yet again. "What shall I read?" he had asked in desperation, and the angel had replied:

"Read, in the Name of your Lord who created, created man from a clot, Read, and your Lord is the Most Gracious, Who taught with the pen, taught man what he did not know." [Q96:1-5]

Although the Prophet (SAW) did not fully realise it at the time, this was the beginning of

the revelation of the Qur'an. In that first encounter with the angel Jibril, the Prophet (SAW) was very frightened, for he did not know who the angel Jibril was or what was happening. He woke up and ran out of the cave only to find Jibril still in front of him, and whenever he turned away from him, there Jibril was in front of him yet again, filling the horizon with his mighty yet beautiful form.

"Oh Muhammad," said Jibril eventually, "you are the Messenger of Allah and I am Jibril," and with these words he disappeared from the Prophet's sight.

After the angel had disappeared the Prophet (SAW) had clambered down the mountain as fast as he could run, not knowing if he was going mad and imagining things, or if he had been possessed by one of the jinn.

As she listened to the Prophet's words, Khadijah (RA) did not share any of these fears. She realised that something tremendous and awe-inspiring had happened to her husband, and she was certain, knowing him as she did, that he was neither mad nor possessed. "Do not worry," she said, "for by Him who has dominion over Khadijah's soul, I hope that you are the Prophet of this nation. Allah would never humiliate you, for you are good to your relatives, you are true to your word, you help those who are in need, you support the weak, you feed the guest and you answer the call of those who are in distress."

When the Prophet (SAW) was a little more relaxed, Khadijah took him to see her cousin, Waraqa ibn Nawfal, for he was a man of knowledge, and she was sure that he would be able to explain the meaning of what had just happened to her beloved husband. Waraqa had studied the books of both the Jews and the Christians very closely and he had learned a great deal from many of their wisest people. He knew that the coming of another Prophet had been foretold by both Moses and Jesus, peace be on them, and he knew many of the signs that would confirm the identity of this Prophet when he appeared.

After listening closely to his story, Waraqa, who was both old and blind, exclaimed, "This is the same being who brought the revelations of Allah to Moses. I wish I was young and could be alive when your people will drive you out."

"Will they drive me out?" asked the Prophet (SAW).

"Yes," replied Waraqa. "No one has come with what you have been given without being treated with enmity; and if I were to live until the day when you are turned out, then I would support you with all my might. Let me just feel your back." So, saying, Waraqa felt between the Prophet's shoulder-blades and found what he was feeling for: a small round, slightly raised irregularity in the skin, about the size of a pigeon's egg. This was yet another of the many signs that Waraqa already knew would indicate the identity of the next Prophet after Isa, the son of Mary (AS).

"This is the Seal of the Prophethood!" he exclaimed. "Now I am certain that you are indeed the Prophet whose coming was foretold in the Torah that was revealed to MUSA (AS) and in the Injil that was revealed to ISA (AS). You are indeed the Messenger of Allah, and the being who appeared to you on the mountain was indeed the angel Jibril!"

Khadijah was both overjoyed and awed to find that her understanding of what had happened on the mountain had been confirmed. Not long after this incident, Muhammad was commanded in a subsequent revelation from Allah, through the angel Jibril, to call people to worship Allah only, and it was at this point that Khadijah did not hesitate in expressing in public what she had now known for certain in secret for some time: "I bear witness that there is no god except Allah," she said, "and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."

In the years that followed, difficult years in which the leaders of the Quraish did everything in their power to stop the Prophet spreading his message, Khadijah (RA) was a constant source of help and

comfort to the Prophet (SAW) in the difficulties which he had to face. All her wealth was spent in the way of Allah, helping to spread the message of her husband, helping to free slaves who had embraced Islam, and helping to feed and shelter the community of Muslims that slowly but surely began to grow in numbers and strength.

The Quraish were infuriated by the Prophet's success and did everything in their power to discourage both him and his followers, often inflicting awful tortures on them, but without success. The situation became so bad that the Prophet told some of his followers to go to Abyssinia, where their ruler, the Negus, who was a sincere Christian gave them shelter and protection. Eventually there came a time when, as Waraqa had foretold, Muhammad and his followers -along with all the members of his tribe, the Banu Hashim were driven out of the city of Mecca and forced to camp out in a small ravine in the mountains nearby. This happened long after Waraqa had died, and about seven years after that extraordinary night of power in which Muhammad (SAW) had received the first revelation of Quran through the angel Jibril. There, while their homes lay empty in Mecca, the Muslims were exposed to the bitterly cold nights of winter and the fiery hot days of summer, with very little food and shelter. No one would buy and sell with the Muslims, or allow their sons and daughters to marry any of them. Fortunately those who secretly sympathised with the Muslims would send what food they could to them whenever the chance arose, sometimes by loading provisions onto a camel or a horse and then sending it off at a gallop in the direction of the camp, hoping that the

animal would not stop or get lost before it reached its intended destination.

For three years the small Muslim community lived a life of hardship and deprivation, but although they suffered from hunger and thirst, and from exposure to heat and cold, this was a time in which the hearts of the first Muslims were both purified and also filled with the light of knowledge and wisdom. The Muslims knew that they were following the truth, and so nothing else mattered. They did not care what the Quraish did to them or said about them. Allah and His Messenger were enough for them!

It was during this period that the Muslims who had sought shelter in Abyssinia returned, only to find the situation even worse than when they had left it. Not long after, many of them returned to Abyssinia, their numbers swelled by those whom the Prophet (SAW) had told to accompany them. Finally the boycott was lifted and the Muslims were allowed to re enter the city; but the three years of hardship had taken their toll. First of all the Prophet's uncle, Abu Talib, who was by then more than eighty years old, died; and then a few months later, during the month of Ramadhān, Khadijah (RA) also died, at the age of sixty-five. The Prophet (SAW) mourned her deeply. They had shared twenty-five years of marriage together and she had given birth to five of his children. Only one of the Prophet's future wives, Maria the Copt, would give him another child, Ibrahim, and he, like Qasim, was destined to die when he was still very young, at the age of eighteen months.

Khadijah (RA) had been the first to publicly accept Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as the Messenger of Allah, and she had never stopped doing all she could to help him. Love and mercy had grown between them, increasing in quality and depth as the years passed by, and not even death could take this love away. The Prophet (SAW) never stopped loving Khadijah (RA), and although he married several more wives in later years and loved them all, it is clear that Khadijah (RA)

always had a special place in his heart. Indeed whenever 'Aisha, his third wife, heard the Prophet speak of Khadijah (RA), or saw him sending food to Khadijah's old friends and relatives, she could not help feeling jealous of her, because of the love that the Prophet still had for her.

Once Aisha asked him if Khadijah (RA) had been the only woman worthy of his love. The Prophet (SAW) replied: "She believed in me when no one else did; she accepted Islam when people rejected me; and she helped and comforted me when there was no one else to lend me a helping hand." It had been related by Abu Hurairah (RA) that on one occasion, when Khadijah (RA) was still alive, Jibril came to the Prophet (SAW) and said, "O Messenger of Allah, Khadijah is just coming with a bowl of soup (or food or drink) for you. When she comes to you, give her greetings of peace from her Lord and from me, and give her the good news of a palace of jewels in the Garden, where there will be neither any noise nor any tiredness." After the Prophet's uncle, Abu Talib, and his first wife, Khadijah (RA), had both died in the same year, the Prophet (SAW) and his small community of believers endured a time of great hardship and persecution at the hands of the Quraish. Indeed the Prophet, who was now fifty years old, name this year 'the Year of Sorrow.'

"....Do not worry," she said, "for by Him who has dominion over Khadijah's soul, I hope that you are the Prophet of this nation. Allah would never humiliate you, for you are good to your relatives, you are true to your word, you help those who are in need, you support the weak, you feed the guest and you answer the call of those who are in distress....."

In private his dearest wife was no longer present to share his life; and in public the insults that he received from the Quraish multiplied, now that he had no longer had the protection of his dead uncle. Even when he journeyed to Ta'if, a small city up in the mountains outside Mecca,

to call its people to worship Allah, he was rejected and stoned by them. It has been related by Aisha that on his way back to Makkah, Jibril appeared to the Prophet (SAW) and said, "Allah, may He be exalted and glorified, has heard what the people have said to you and how they have responded to your invitation, and he has sent the angel in charge of the mountains so that you can tell him what you want him to with them." Then the angel in charge of the mountains called out to him and greeted him and said, "O Muhammad, Allah has listened to what your people have said to you. I am the angel in charge of the mountains, and your Lord has sent me so that you can order me to do whatever you want. If you wish, I can bring the mountain of the outskirts of Mecca together so that they are crushed between them." But the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said to him, "Rather I hope that Allah will make their descendants a people who will worship Allah alone, without ascribing any partners to him."

After three years of constant struggle, a relative of his, called Khawla, went to him and pointed out that his house was sadly neglected and that his daughters needed a mother to look after them. "But who can take the place of Khadijah?" he asked. "Aisha, the daughter of Abu Bakr, the dearest of people to you," she answered. Abu Bakr (RA) had been the first man to accept Islam and he was the Prophet's closest companion. Like Khadijah (RA), he had done all that he could do to help the Prophet (SAW), and had spent all his wealth in the way of Allah. The Prophet (SAW) accepted Khawla's suggestion and married A'isha (RA).

[An abridged version of an article available online at <http://www.anwary-islam.com>]

ARRIVALS

1. Abdullahi Muhammad, from Kano studying for B.Eng. in Chemical Engineering, University of Leeds.
2. Abdullahi Seghosimi from Auchu studying for B. Eng. Electrical Engineering, University of Leeds.
3. Bala Magaji Dambatta from Kano studying for M.Sc. in Engineering Project Management, University of Leeds.
4. Daleel Abubakar Gere from Adamawa State following a B.Sc. programme, University of Leeds.
5. Fatai Ogunsola from Lagos State studying for B.Sc. in Accounting, University of Leeds.
6. Mukhtar Bakura from Zamfara State following an M.Sc. programme in Public Health, University of Leeds and Leeds General Hospital, Leeds.
7. Sanusi Wasiyullah from Oyo State following a B.Eng. programme in Chemical Engineering, University of Leeds.

BIRTHS

1. The family of Dr Muhammad Sani Ibrahim (Manchester) has been blessed with a birth of a baby girl. They named her Ruqayyah. May Allah (SWT) enable them to bring her up in the right manner, according to Islamic teachings, ameen.

DEATHS

1. Dr Shehu Yakasai (Leeds) lost his mother. May Allah (SAW) forgive her short-comings, have Mercy on her and give their family the fortitude to bear this great loss, ameen.
2. Alhaji Sadudeen Daniju, former President of the Muslim Association of Nigeria and a very active Daa'iy in the Nigerian Muslim Community in UK, died after a protracted illness. May Allah (SWT) forgive him have mercy on him and enable his family and the Nigerian Muslim Community the fortitude to bear this great loss, amen.

Spring Conference 2005

The Nigeria Muslim Forum (UK) is organizing a one-day Spring Conference scheduled to take place on Saturday 30th April 2005 in Birmingham insha'Allah. The theme of the conference is:

Globalisation and Islamic Revival In Nigeria: Prospects and Threats.

Speakers expected at the Conference include Professor Dawud Noibi, IQRA Trust, London, Dr Kemal Helbawi, Senior Elder and first President, Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), and Dr Abdullahi Shehu, Consultant Neurologist and Chairman, Muslim Doctors and Dentists Association (MDDA). Full details of the event will be circulated shortly insha'Allah.

We hope that you will make effort to attend this event insha'Allah

"Live as long as you may, for verily you must die. Love whoever you wish, for one day you shall taste its separation, and do what you will, you will be rewarded accordingly" (Al-Ghazali)