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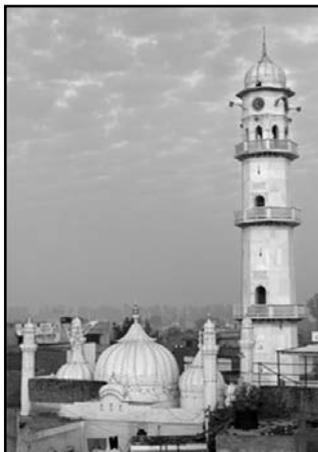
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KHILAFAT IN ISLAM

Our curtain raiser review of the concept of Khilafat as presented in Islam. A Khalifa is a Vicegerent and is appointed by God. Can Khilafat be perpetuated by a corporate entity? What is the difference between prophethood and Khilafat, Successors of the Holy Prophet^(saw) and the Promised Messiah^(as)?
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Cover photo: Qadian.

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Commencing with this issue, *The Review of Religions* is publishing a series of monthly special editions leading up to our expanded edition in May 2008, the first centenary of the establishment of the institution of Khilafat in the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. The centenary itself, like all other centenaries commemorated by the community, is not a time of pomp or merriment but one of sincere thanksgiving that this bounty promised to the true believers of God has taken root and continues to flourish.

Ever since the creation of man, it has been the way of God that He has sent Prophets who have served as spiritual teachers for the guidance of those whom the Prophet addressed. Some people follow this guidance and do good works and others disbelieve and continue in their evil ways. When such cruelties exceed all limits, God's punishment descends upon them, as is set out in the Holy Qur'an:

He who follows the right way follows it only for the good of his own soul; and he who goes astray, goes astray only to his own loss. And no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of

another. We never punish until We have sent a Messenger.
(Ch.17:V.16)

...And as for those who disbelieve, disaster shall not cease to befall them for what they have wrought or to alight near their home, until the promise of Allah comes to pass. Surely, Allah fails not in His promise. (Ch.13:V.32)

A sign of the latter days is that man would have forgotten his Creator and would have steeped to bestiality in his cruelty. Past Prophets have foretold that there would be many disasters in this age, no doubt a reflection of punishment man is receiving due to his spiritual malaise. The above verse however makes clear that God's punishment is preceded by the appearance of His Prophet, so has God kept His promise and sent a Reformer and a Warner that the world so desperately needs?

The Promised Reformer and Warner has certainly appeared. His name is Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as), Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. He advent was also accompanied by the glad tiding that he would be followed by a *Khilafat* –

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the Second Manifestation of Divine glory contained in the verse in the Holy Qur'an revealed in Madinah:

Allah has promised to those among you [the followers of Muhammad^(saw)] who believe and do good works that He will surely make them Successors in the earth, as He made Successors from among those who were before them; and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them; and that He will surely give them in exchange security and peace after their fear. They will worship Me, and they will not associate anything with Me. Then whoso is ungrateful after that, they will be the rebellious.

(Ch.24:V.56)

If a person reflects upon the above verse, then he will realise that God Almighty has clearly promised Muslims a permanent succession, since the verse does not restrict itself to any particular time period. The only requirement for them is to *believe and do good works*, i.e. accept His Prophet and following his guidance.

The institution of Khilafat also reminds us that man is mortal, but such limitations have no bearing on God's design that ensures the continued

success of His Prophets. Once a Prophet has passed away, the bright light of his teaching is enveloped by darkness. His opponents think that this is the end of his chapter. In this vacuum, the Prophet's followers are immersed in fear, but God manifests His glory once again. A bright moon appears that comforts the believers. The works undertaken by the Prophet are thus completed by his Successors or *Khalifas*ⁱ who follow him as evidenced by the Khilafat Rashidah, the Rightly-Guided Khalifas who appeared after Prophet Muhammad^(saw).

As mentioned earlier there is no time limit for Khilafat in Islam and it would be a great folly to say that this bounty was only limited to a period of thirty years after the demise of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(saw). Many verses of the Holy Qur'an and Traditions give Muslims the glad tiding of a permanent Khilafat. Islam is not a dead religion whose blessings are confined to the past. Its blessings continue. The Mosaic dispensation, that was sent to guide the Israelites, had this blessing for hundreds of years so it would have been illogical if the followers of Prophet Muhammad^(saw), a Messenger who was sent as a mercy unto all mankind, should have been deprived of this blessing after a mere thirty years.

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Khilafat is a kingpin of Islamic unity and the driving force of a discipline based on absolute obedience and loyalty that alone can bring about the true progress of Islam. There are many in the Muslim world, like the Hizb-ut-Tahrir, who have tried to revive Khilafat but their attempts have failed because they are trying to put the cart before the horse. Like many before them, they believe that God spoke before but does not reveal Himself anymore. But once you deprive yourself this bounty, you do not merit any other and you certainly do not merit Khilafat, as that is an office that provides a living example of communion with the Divine. It is also a holy manifestation that is established only by a Prophet of God and not by man. It is therefore impossible for this to be revived by human effort alone – it necessitates Divine help and Divine converse. The perpetuity of this divine bounty was re-established, as prophesied by the Holy Prophet^(saw), by the Promised Messiah^(as) who is the prophet of the latter days and was tasked with Islam's revival.

Our special issues in this and the next few months will focus on the life, tenure and principal achievements of those who succeeded the Holy Prophet^(saw) and the Promised Messiah^(as). We are confident that our

readers will find these editions highly informative. By way of a foretaste read our lead article in this edition that focuses on the concept of Khilafat in Islam.

Mansoor Shah

- i. The Arabic word for a Successor or Vicegerent is *Khalifa*. The plural is *Khulafa*, but in these editions we have permitted the use of the word *Khalifas*. Another meaning of Khalifa is a great King. A third meaning is that Imam above whom there is no other Imam. According to *Aqrab Al-Muwarid*, one meaning of *Al-Khilafa* (the office held by the Khalifa) is *Al-Amara* (government or rule); or *An-Niyaba*, meaning to undertake a task being performed by someone who is not present then or who has died and his work needs to be continued as his deputy or vicegerent or successor. We have used the word *Khilafat* in lieu of the slightly less well-known Arabic word *Khilafa* sometimes spelt as *Khilafah* for the institution or the office held by the *Khalifa*; we have refrained from the anglicised use of the word *Caliph* unless part of a quotation.

ESSENCE OF ISLAM:

Part 24 – What is Revelation?

This series sets out, in the words of the Promised Messiah^(as), Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a summary of his exposition of four outstanding topics: ISLAM; ALLAH, THE EXALTED; THE HOLY PROPHET^(saw) and THE HOLY QUR'AN. The original compilation, in Urdu, from which these extracts have been translated into English, was collated with great care and diligence by Syed Daud Ahmad Sahib, Allah have mercy on him and reward him graciously for his great labour of love. Amin. The English rendering is by the late Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, may Allah be pleased with him, and is quoted from *The Essence of Islam*, Volume 1. All references throughout, unless otherwise specifically mentioned, are from the Holy Qur'an.

What is Revelation?

By revelation is not meant something that arises in the mind as a result of thinking and reflection, like that which a poet experiences in writing his verses. He writes a verse and reflects about the next one and it suddenly arises in his mind. This is not revelation; it is a consequence of thought and reflection, which flows from the law of nature. Anyone who thinks about good things or evil things finds that something arises in his mind in consonance with his thinking and his search. For instance, a good and righteous person writes some verses in support of truth and

another one, who is wicked, supports falsehood in his verses and abuses the righteous. Each of them will produce some verses and it should be no matter for surprise that the enemy of the righteous who writes in support of falsehood may, on account of greater practice, write better verses than the other one. Thus, if anything arising in the mind were to be called revelation, a wicked poet, who is the enemy of truth and of the righteous and always abuses the truth and indulges in imposture, would be deemed the recipient of Divine revelation. Works of fiction contain many affecting passages and the minds

of authors are able to produce a series of writings on purely fictitious subjects, but they cannot be called revelation. If revelation were the name of any idea arising in the mind, a thief could be called a recipient of revelation for he can think of clever ways of robbery and ingenious plans of house-breaking and manslaughter cross his mind. We cannot call all this revelation. This is the thinking of people who have no clear notion of the True God, Who comforts the hearts with His converse and bestows the understanding of spiritual knowledge on those who are not familiar with it.

What is revelation? It is God's converse in living and powerful words with a chosen servant or with one whom He desires to choose. When this converse starts in an abundant and satisfactory manner and is free from the darkness of false thinking and is not confined to a few scattered and incomplete phrases, and is delicious and is full of wisdom and majesty, it is the Word of God by which He desires to comfort His servant and through which He manifests Himself to him.



The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as).

The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as). In 1891, he claimed, on the basis of Divine revelation, that he was the Promised Messiah and Mahdi whose advent had been foretold by Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and by the scriptures of other faiths.

The founder's claim constitutes the basis of the beliefs of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community.

Sometimes a communication is made only for the purpose of a trial and is not accompanied by all the characteristic blessings of revelation. A servant of God Almighty is thereby tried whether

by tasting a little of revelation he adjusts his circumstances to those of true recipients of revelation or fails to do so. Then if he does not adopt true righteousness, he is deprived of the perfection of this bounty and is left with only vain boasting.

Millions of good people receive revelation but they have not all the same rank in the estimation of Allah. Even the Prophets who are the recipients of clear revelation are not all equal in rank, as God Almighty has said:

These Messengers have We exalted, some of them above others: among them there are those to whom Allah spoke [i.e. He gave them a new Law]; and some of them He exalted by degrees of rank. (Ch.2:V.254)

This means that some Messengers are superior to others. It shows that revelation is pure grace and is not the insignia of rank. Rank depends upon the degree of sincerity and fidelity, which is known only to God. Revelation when accompanied by its blessed conditions is also a fruit of

sincerity and fidelity. There is no doubt that if revelation takes the form of question and answer in a proper sequence and is characterised by Divine majesty and light and comprises hidden matters or true understanding, then it is Divine revelation. For Divine revelation, it is necessary that there should be converse between the servant and his Lord as there is converse between friends when they meet. When the servant asks a question and in reply hears a delicious and eloquent speech from God Almighty, in which there is nothing of his own thinking and reflection and such converse becomes a bounty, then it is Divine speech and such a servant is dear to God. But this degree of revelation, which is a bounty, and is living, pure, clear, and unsullied, is bestowed only upon those who march forward in their faith, sincerity, righteous action, and also in what is simply ineffable. True and holy revelation demonstrates great wonders of the Divine. On many occasions, a brilliant light appears and along with it a majestic and shining revelation is conveyed.

What could be greater than a recipient of revelation conversing with the Being Who is the Creator of heaven and earth? The beholding of God in this world is to converse with God. By this, we do not mean that condition in which some odd word, phrase or verse might flow from the tongue of a person without being accompanied by a direct address. A person who has such an experience is being tried. He casts about like a blind one and does not know the source of the communication whether it is from God or from Satan. Such a one should have recourse to *lstighfar*. But if a good and righteous person begins to receive Divine communication without obstruction, a bright, delicious communication which is full of wisdom, in majestic terms and in complete wakefulness, and there has passed between him and God Almighty a series of at least ten questions and answers in the course of which God accepted his prayers a number of times and conveyed to him fine understandings and informed him of coming events, then such a person should be most grateful to God and should be wholly devoted to Him, inasmuch as God has of His pure

grace chosen him out of all His servants and has made him heir to the righteous ones who have passed on before him. Such a bounty occurs rarely and is a matter of good fortune. Everything beside it is of no value.

Islam has always produced people of this rank and station. It is Islam alone in which God comes close to a servant and talks to him. He speaks inside him and makes his heart His throne and draws him towards heaven and bestows upon him all the bounties that have been bestowed upon those who have gone before. It is a pity that the blind world does not appreciate how near a person can approach to God. They do not step forward themselves and when some one steps forward he is either dubbed a *Kafir* or is deified and is put in the place of God.

(Islami Usul Ki Philosophy, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol.10, pp.437-441)

Revelation Provides Comfort in Distress

It is idle to assert that revelation has no reality and is a vain thing, the harm of which is greater than its benefit. Such an assertion is made

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only by a person who has never tasted this pure wine and does not desire to have true faith. Such a one is happy with his habits and customs and never seeks to find out to what degree he believes in the Almighty God and how far his understanding extends and what should he do so that his inner weaknesses are removed and a living change takes place in his morals, actions, and designs. He is not eager to cultivate that love which should make his journey to the other world easy and whereby he should develop the inner quality of making spiritual progress.

Everyone can understand that this heedless life is ever pulling a person downward, with his relationship with wife and children and with the burden of honour and good repute, which are all like heavy stones pressing him downwards. He is in need of a high power, which, by bestowing true sight and true vision upon him, should make him eager to behold the perfect beauty of God Almighty. That high power is Divine revelation that provides comfort in distress. It enables a person to take his stand joyously

and comfortably under mountains of misfortunes. That Imperceptible Being, Who confounds the reason and wisdom of all philosophers, manifests Himself only through revelation. He comforts the hearts of seekers and bestows contentment upon them and revives the half-dead ones by saying: I am present. It is true that the Holy Qur'an contains all the guidance, but when the Qur'an leads a person to the fountain of guidance the first indication of it is that he begins to experience converse with the Divine, whereby a revealing understanding of high degree and a visible blessing and light is created and that cognition begins to be acquired which cannot be achieved by blind following or through intellectual theories, for they are all limited, full of doubts, defective, and incomplete. We need to extend our cognition directly, for the greater our cognition the greater will be our eagerness. With a defective cognition, we cannot expect perfect eagerness. It is a matter of surprise how unintelligent those people are who do not consider themselves in need of that perfect means of approaching the truth

upon which spiritual life depends.

It should be remembered that spiritual knowledge and spiritual understanding can be acquired only through revelation and visions, and until we achieve that standard of light our humanness cannot acquire any true understanding or true perfection.

Revelation is a Means of Salvation

We have been created for a great purpose, which is the true understanding of God; on that understanding depends our salvation. It delivers us from every impure and doubtful way and leads us to the edge of a pure and clear river. It can be acquired only through Divine revelation. When, being delivered entirely from our ego, we dive deep with an eager heart into an unattainable Being, our humanness, having appeared in the court of Godhead, returns with some signs and lights from that world. Thus that which the worldly ones look upon with contempt is the only thing which brings a long-separated one in an instant to his Beloved and bestows comfort upon the lovers of the

Divine. It relieves a person suddenly of all types of egoistic limitations; until that true light descends upon the heart, it is not possible that the heart should be illuminated. The imperfection of human reason and the limitations of current knowledge bear witness to the need of revelation.

[Izala-e-Auham, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 3, pp. 326-329]

OBJECTION: The belief that God sends down His word from heaven is utterly wrong for the law of nature does not confirm it, nor do we ever hear a voice coming down from above. Revelation is the name given to those thoughts which arise in the minds of wise people by the use of reflection and observation, and that is all.

ANSWER: A truth which is well-established and has been observed with their own eyes by numberless men of understanding, and the proof of which can be found in every age by a seeker after truth, suffers no harm by the denial of a person who is bereft of spiritual insight. If the thinking or defective knowledge of a person whose heart is wrapped up in coverings

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fails to confirm it, the truth cannot be considered as being outside the law of nature. For instance, if a person who is unaware of the power of attraction of a magnet, and has never seen a magnet, were to claim that a magnet is only a piece of stone and that he has never witnessed any such power of attraction in any stone, and, therefore, it is wrong to assert that a magnet has such a power for this is contrary to the law of nature, then would his assertion cast doubt on the well-established quality of a magnet? Certainly not. All that his assertion would prove would be that he is stupid and ignorant who considers his own lack of knowledge as proof of the non-existence of a reality and does not accept the evidence of thousands of people who have experience of it.

It is not possible to hold that every law of nature should be capable of being tested by every individual. God Almighty has created the human species with great diversity in their overt and covert faculties. For instance, some people possess very good sight, others are weak-sighted and some are altogether

blind. When those who are weak sighted, find that those with good sight have perceived a thing from afar – for instance, they have sighted the crescent which they themselves are unable to see—they do not deny it and think that their denial would only expose their weakness. The blind, of course, have nothing to say in such a matter. In the same way, those who possess no sense of smell believe those serious and truthful people who speak of good smell and ill smell. They do not doubt them for they know that so many people do not tell lies and must be speaking the truth, and that without doubt their own sense of smell is lacking and that is why they are unable to experience any smell.

Men also differ in respect of their covert capacities. The capacities of some are of a low degree and are covered up by veils. Some have from ancient times possessed high and clear souls and have been the recipients of Divine revelation. For the former to deny the personal characteristics of the latter would be the same as if a blind one, or one with weak sight, were to deny the observations of

one with excellent sight, or as if a person lacking the sense of smell should deny the experiences of one with a sense of smell.

Then to convince a person who denies the existence of revelation, there are ways like the ways of convincing a person who denies the observations of the overt senses. For instance, if one who is congenitally bereft of the sense of smell should deny the existence of good and foul smell, and should assert that those who claim such a sense are liars or are mistaken, he can be persuaded to admit his mistake in the following manner. He should be asked to select a few pieces of clothing and rub some with perfume and leave others untouched and thus test the sense of smell of a normal person, so that by repeated experiences he would be convinced both of the existence of this sense of smell and that there are to be found people who can distinguish between that which is fragrant and that which has no smell. In the same way, the existence of revelation can be proved to the satisfaction of a seeker after truth through repeated experiments.

When hidden matters and secret mysteries which cannot be discovered through the experience of reason alone are disclosed to a recipient of revelation, and a revealed book is found to contain wonders which are not to be discovered in any other book, a seeker after truth realises that Divine revelation is an established truth. If such a person possesses a pure soul, he himself, by treading on the right path can, to the extent of the illumination of his heart, have experience of Divine revelation like the *Auliya*, whereby he acquires a certain knowledge of the revelation vouchsafed to the Messengers of God. For a seeker after truth who would sincerely express a desire to accept Islam, I am prepared to provide this means of satisfaction.

‘If anyone should doubt my word, let him come to me with sincerity. Allah has the power to do what I say and He is the Helper in every matter’.

Fine Thought is not to be Confused with Revelation

To imagine that the fine points that are disclosed to people through

reflection and observation are revelation, and that revelation is nothing more than this, is an error due to ignorance. Were it true that human thinking constituted Divine revelation then man also could have discovered the unseen by the use of his reflection and observation. It is obvious that however wise a person may be he cannot disclose anything hidden by merely reflecting on the matter. Nor can he exhibit any sign of Divine power. His speech indicates no sign of God's Power and, however much he might reflect, he cannot discover the unseen which is beyond his reason and observation and his other senses. Nor is his speech or composition of such a high degree that no one can compete with him. Thus, there are enough reasons for a wise person to conclude that whatever a man might think in consequence of his own reflection, or observation, cannot be the Word of God. Had it been the Word of God, a person would have had access to all that is unseen and would have been able to expound those matters the exposition of which depends upon Divine power, inasmuch as it is necessary

that the Work of God and the Word of God should disclose Divine manifestations.

The Distinction between Creation and Command

It may be asked from whom and wherefrom proceed the good and bad designs that arise in one's mind as the result of reflection and observation? The answer is that such thoughts are the creation of Allah and not His command. There is a difference between creation and command. By creation is meant that God Almighty produces something through physical means and attributes it to Himself because He is the Cause of causes. Command is that which proceeds directly from God Almighty without the intervention of any means. Revelation, which descends from God, proceeds from the world of command and not from the world of creation.

Thoughts that arise in people's minds in consequence of observation and reflection all proceed from the world of creation in which the Divine power operates behind the veil of means.

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God has created men in the world of means equipped with diverse types of powers and faculties and has invested them with the characteristic that when they employ their reflection in a good or bad matter their minds alight upon appropriate plans. As it is part of the law of nature that when a person opens his eyes he can see something and when he directs his ear towards sound he can hear something; in the same way when he reflects on the way of success in a good or bad design, some plan arises in his mind. A good man by reflecting upon good designs, thinks of good things, and a thief, by reflecting upon the various ways of robbery, invents a plan to commit robbery. Just as a man can think of deep and devious evil designs, in the same way when he uses his faculty in a good way, he can think of good designs. As his bad thoughts, however deep and effective they may be, cannot be held to be revelation, in the same way his thoughts which he deems to be good are not revelation. In short, whatever good thoughts occur to good people and whatever bad thoughts or designs arise in the minds of thieves and robbers

and murderers and adulterers and forgers as the result of reflection and observation are all the result of the exercise of natural qualities, and because God is the Cause of causes, they are called the creation of God and not His command. They are the natural qualities of man as in the case of some vegetables the quality of purgation or the quality of constipation and other qualities are natural to them. As God has invested other things with different types of qualities, He has invested man's power of reflection with the quality that it helps man whenever he requires its help in a good or bad design. A poet who seeks to lampoon anyone finds his mind working in that direction and he is able to produce such poetry. Another poet seeks to praise the same person and commendatory verses come to his mind. This kind of good or bad thought is not the mirror of the Divine will and cannot be called His word. God's holy word is the word which is far above human faculties and is full of perfection and power and holiness. The very first condition of its manifestation is that human faculties should be entirely suspended and rendered

useless. There should be neither reflection nor observation and the person concerned should be dead like a corpse. All means should be cut off and God Almighty, Whose Being alone is actual and real, should cause His word to descend upon the heart of someone by His special design.

It should be understood that as the light of the sun comes only from heaven and cannot be produced inside the eye, in the same way the light of revelation descends from God and by His design and does not arise from inside a person. As God truly exists and sees, hears, knows and speaks, His word should descend from Him and should not be the product of man's mind. From our minds arise the same thoughts, good or bad, which dwell within us according to our nature, but God's limitless knowledge and boundless wisdom cannot dwell in our hearts. What greater denial of God could there be than for a man to think that all the Divine treasures of knowledge and wisdom and hidden mysteries are present in our hearts and surge up in them. This would mean that we ourselves are God and that

there is no Being outside of us Who is Self-Existing and possesses Divine attributes, Who should be called God. For if God truly exists and His unlimited knowledge is special to Him, of which our hearts cannot be the measure, then utterly wrong and senseless would be the observation that God's limitless knowledge fills our hearts and all the treasures of His wisdom dwell therein as if God's knowledge is limited to that which is contained in our hearts. This would amount to a claim of Godhead itself, but is it possible that the heart of man should comprehend all the excellencies of the Divine? Is it permissible that a particle should become the sun? Certainly not.

We have already stated that the characteristics of the Divine, like His knowledge of the unseen and His comprehension of wisdom and other natural signs, cannot be manifested by man. God's word should be characterised by God's Greatness, God's Power, God's Blessing, God's Wisdom and God's Peerlessness. All these characteristics are found in the Holy Qur'an, the proof of which

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we shall set forth at its proper place.

If those of Brahmū Samaj still persist in denying the existence of revelation, which comprehends the unseen and other proofs of power, they should study the Holy Qur'an with full attention, so that they should come to know that in this Holy Word surges a whole ocean of matters that are unseen and manifestations of power which are beyond the strength of man. If they should be unable, through lack of insight, to discover these Qur'anic excellencies themselves, they should read this book of ours with attention so that they might discover as a sample some of the treasures of hidden matters and powerful mysteries of which the Holy Qur'an is full. They should also know that as proof of the existence of Divine revelation that descends from God and comprehends hidden matters, there is another way that is open and that is that God Almighty always creates from among the Muslims, who base themselves upon the true faith, such people who receive revelation from God and disclose such hidden matters

the disclosure of which is not within the power of anyone except of God, the One, without associate. God Almighty bestows this holy revelation only on those of the faithful who truly believe in the Holy Qur'an as the Word of God and act upon it with full sincerity and who believe in Muhammad, the chosen one (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) as the true and perfect Prophet, who is better and higher and more exalted than all the Prophets and is *Khatam-ur-Rusul*, and accept him as their guide. Such revelation is not vouchsafed to the Jews and Christians and Aryas and Brahmū, but has always been vouchsafed to the perfect followers of the Holy Qur'an and is now vouchsafed to them and will continue to be vouchsafed to them. Though the prophetic revelation has been cut off as no longer needed, the revelation that is vouchsafed to the sincere servants of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) will never be cut off. This revelation is a grand proof of the revelation which is special to Messengership and humiliates every opponent of

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Islam. As this blessed revelation with all its blessing and honour and greatness and glory is vouchsafed only to those honourable servants who are included among the Muslims and are the servants of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). The followers of all other sects are deprived of this perfect light which carries the good news of nearness to God and of acceptance by Him and of His pleasure. Thus this holy revelation not only proves its own existence, but also proves that the Muslims alone are the people who are acceptable to God and who base themselves on the true faith that all other people worship falsehood and are misguided and are under the wrath of God. Ignorant people will say all sorts of things on hearing this and will shake their heads in denial or will ridicule me like foolish and wicked persons. They should know, however, that denial and ridicule are not the way of those who possess nobility and are seekers after truth, but are the way of those wicked people who have nothing to do with God and truth.

There are thousands of things in the world which possess qualities that cannot be understood by reason and are known only by experience. It is, therefore, the way of the wise that when some quality of a thing is manifested repeatedly by experience they no longer doubt its existence. He who persists in denial after repeated experience is an absolute fool. For instance, rhubarb is a cathartic and a magnet has the power of attraction and though there is no reason why they should possess these qualities, yet when repeated experience manifests that they have these qualities, every reasonable person has to admit that rhubarb is a cathartic and a magnet has the power to attract. If anyone should deny this on the ground that there is no reason for it, such a one would be condemned as mad or insane. So we submit to the Brahmus and other opponents that whatever we have stated concerning revelation, namely, that it is even now the experience of perfect individuals among the Muslims and is confined to them and is not to be found in any others, is not without proof, but can be demonstrated to

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every seeker through test and experience like thousands of other truths which are being discovered by these means. If anyone should be truly a seeker after truth, we undertake to demonstrate this to him provided he should make a sincere promise in writing that, in case of proof, he would accept Islam and should then turn to us with sincerity and in good faith.

But if they turn away, then remember that Allah knows the mischief-makers well.

(Ch.3:V.64)

(Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Vol III, pp.210-217, footnote 11 (Amritsar, Safir Hind Press, 1882, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 1 (London 1984))

Verse references to the Holy Qur'an item count 'Bismillah...' (In the Name of Allah...) as the first verse of each Chapter. In some non-standard texts, this is not counted. Should the reader refer to such texts, the verse quoted in *The Review of Religions* will be found a verse earlier, i.e. at one verse less than the number quoted.

In this journal, for the ease of non-Muslim readers, '(saw)' or 'saw' after the words, 'Holy Prophet', or the name 'Muhammad', are used. They stand for '*Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*' meaning 'peace and blessings of Allah be upon him'. Likewise, the letters '(as)' or 'as' after the name of all other prophets is an abbreviation meaning 'peace be upon him' derived from '*Alaihis salatu wassalam*' which are words that a Muslim utters out of respect whenever he or she comes across that name. The abbreviation 'ra' or (ra) stands for '*Radhiallahu Ta'ala anhu*' and is used for Companions of a Prophet, meaning Allah be pleased with him or her (when followed by the relevant Arabic pronoun). Finally, 'ru' or (ru) for *Rahemallahu Ta'ala* means the Mercy of Allah the Exalted be upon him.

In keeping with current universal practice, local transliterations of names of places are preferred to their anglicised versions, e.g. Makkah instead of Mecca, etc.

KHILAFAT in Islam

By Fareed Ahmad – UK

Introduction

The absence of any meaningful and authoritative leadership is a significant issue facing Muslims today. The world at large is in a state of turmoil, and Muslims in particular are facing tremendous difficulties – both as a result of actions taken against them and as a result of their own inability to recognise the signs and guidance contained in the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith.

Consequently, Muslims – who more than anyone else should be associated with peace and security – are struggling for peace in this world. Despite their historic achievements in spiritual and worldly affairs they are in a state of loss.

The knowledgeable amongst them are yearning for leadership and unity that in reality only Khilafat could provide, yet, paradoxically in their own analysis and reasoning, they have closed the door to the possibility of such Khilafat ever

existing. This is because they have rejected the possibility of prophethood after Prophet Muhammad^(saw) whereas khilafat itself is linked specifically to prophethood.

Khilafat in the Qur'an

The word *Khalifa* is an Arabic word that means 'successor, deputy, vicegerent'¹. It has been used in several places in the Qur'an and according to the context it relates to people in two ways – refers generally to a group of people and the other to an individual as a leader of others. In the first case it is often used to refer to people as inheritors or successors of a people before them², whereas in the second it refers to individuals as khalifas tasked with leadership by God.

Can Khilafat be perpetuated by a corporate body?

Some commentators claim that the true meaning of khilafat is its collective term and simply means 'trusteeship' with persons acting as

individual trustees of God on earth or according to other commentators a group having a collective responsibility to lead others. In this regard they argue that as the word khalifa has been used as a plural in some verses in the Qur'an this indicates that it refers to people collectively rather than individually as khalifa. For example in Surah Al-Nur, Ch.24 verse 56 it states:

Allah has promised to those among you who believe and do good works that He will surely make them Khalifas [Successors] in the earth, as He made Khalifas [Successors] from among those who were before them...

However, to take the above verse to mean that 'khalifas' refers to people collectively reveals a superficial and incomplete understanding of the Qur'an. The reason for this is that usage of a plural in the Qur'an does not automatically mean that it refers to all people. In his book *An Exposition of Some Criticisms Against Khilafat-i-Rashida*, Maulana Sheikh Mubarak Ahmad responds to this issue by referring to Chapter 5 verse 21 of the Qur'an

in which Allah says:

And remember when Moses said to his people, 'O my people, call to mind Allah's favour upon you when He appointed Prophets among you and made you kings...

Sheikh Mubarak Ahmad then explains that:

'Here the address is made to the people as a whole who are reminded of the blessings of having been made kings and prophets, yet it is known that not all of the people had been so exalted and there had always been a large populace of ordinary working people. It proves therefore that promises made in a collective sense are deemed fulfilled through individual beneficiaries...

'In addition, the verse [in Sura Al-Nur] itself provides support for this interpretation where it says: *He will surely make them successors in the earth as He made successors from among those before them.* That is to say, if in olden times a corporate body was given the

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responsibilities of Khilafat, one should expect the same pattern emerging now, but if it were individuals who succeeded as Khalifas in the past, the same system would continue henceforth. The words *as He made successors* have therefore removed all doubts about the authenticity of individual Khilafat for good.’
(An Exposition of Some Criticisms Against Khilafat-i-Rashida by Maulana Sheikh Mubarak Ahmad, pp.9-10, London Mosque, 1979)

Maulana Sheikh Mubarak Ahmad further notes that following the Holy Prophet’s^(saw) demise God demonstrated the true meaning of khilafat once again, as it was a pattern of individual rather than collective khilafat that followed and this could not have happened had it not been God’s will.

Another powerful argument that strengthens this interpretation is that in the Qur’an God Himself refers to individuals as khalifas who are tasked with leading people as is the case of Prophet Adam^(as) and Prophet David^(as)³. Add to this the understanding and inter-

pretation of the Holy Prophet^(saw) who understood the Qur’an the best. He fully expected that after his demise a person who would be designated as a khalifa would lead the Muslims.

The Holy Prophet^(saw) said:

‘...I enjoin you to fear Allah, hear and obey even if your *Amir* [Leader] be an Abyssinian slave, for a time is coming that those of you who live after me will see great disagreement. You must then follow my rightly guided *Khulafa* [caliphs] and me. Adhere to it and hold fast to it...’⁴

It is also reported that he proposed to name Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) as khalifa, but later retracted this on account of his trust in God⁵.

This tells us that the Holy Prophet^(saw), with full knowledge of the meaning of the word khalifa in the Qur’an, understood it to mean individual leadership. Had he understood khilafat to mean just trusteeship then he would have never even considered the issue of leadership after his death, let alone entertain the thought of naming an

individual to lead as a khalifa after him.

It is, therefore, evident that the true khilafat that has been promised to Muslims in Sura Al-Nur is on the same grounds as before the advent of Islam i.e. one that is centred on an individual as a chosen leader of the faithful.

Khilafat and Prophethood

This concept of khilafat is developed further in the Qur'an. Hadhrat Mirza Bashirudin Mahmud Ahmad^(ra) in his extensive commentary on the Qur'an notes that:

'The Qur'an has mentioned three kinds of Khalifas:

1. **Khalifas who are prophets** such as Adam^(as) and David^(as). About Adam^(as) God says in the Qur'an, '*I am about to appoint a vicegerent in the earth,*' (Ch.2:V.31) and about David^(as) He says:

'O David, We have made thee a vicegerent in the earth;...' (Ch.38:V.27).

[It should be pointed out that

even though David is regarded as a King and not a Prophet by some Jews, the Holy Qur'an makes it very clear that he was a Messenger of God who was given a revealed book - Ed].

2. **Prophets who are Khalifas** of another and greater Prophet such as the Israelite prophets who all were the *Khalifas* of Moses^(as). About them the Qur'an says:

...We have sent down the Torah wherein was guidance and light. By it did the Prophets, who were obedient to Us, judge for the Jews... (Ch.5:V.45):

3. **Non-Prophet Khalifas of a Prophet**, with or without temporal powers, such as godly people [*Rabbaniyyin*] learned in Law. Their mission is to protect and preserve the law from being tampered with (Ch.5:V.45) [*By it did the Prophets, who were obedient to Us, judge for the Jews, as did godly people and those learned in the Law; because they were required to preserve the Book of Allah, and because they were guardians over it.*]' ⁶

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(The third category therefore includes the *Khulafa-e-Rashideen* (the Rightly Guided Khalifas) as they were not prophets but were the khalifas of the Muslims after the Holy Prophet^(saw). Interestingly enough none challenged the concept of their khilafat as rulers and successors to the Prophet^(saw), and this is not surprising since they must have shared the Prophet's understanding on this important matter).

From the above commentary it is evident that there is a fundamental and unbreakable link between khilafat and prophethood. When the Qur'an talks of khalifas as leaders of people, we can see that the khalifas are intrinsically linked to prophethood in that they are either prophets themselves, or servants of prophets before them. In the former case, the prophethood will be proclaimed by the khalifa in question. For khalifas who follow in the footsteps of other greater prophets they will make clear who that prophet is. The teaching or shariah that they seek to uphold and protect will also reflect this link.

Examples of *Khulafa* who were not prophets can be found in the Mosaic

dispensation in which Joshua followed Moses^(as) as his khalifa and Peter followed Jesus^(as) as his khalifa.

After the demise of the Holy Prophet^(saw) this form of khilafat is certainly evident in its early period because Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) was elected as the first khalifa of the Muslims after Prophet Muhammad^(saw). This blessed institution of khilafah remained with the Muslims for twenty nine years until the end of the Khilafat of Hadhrat Ali^(ra).

Before examining the relevance and possibility of khilafat today it is worth taking a brief look at the period from Khilafat Rashida to the present time, and see how, if at all, it relates to the teachings and prophecies in the Qur'an and Hadith.

The blessed Khilafat Rashida (632CE-661CE)

It is not intended here to give a detailed exposition of the achievements during this blessed era but a brief review will suffice to show that the khalifas during this period were blessed by God and managed in very difficult circum-

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stances to set in place systems and practices that provided lasting benefits to Muslims.

Karen Armstrong notes the challenges faced by the first four Khalifas:

‘They were all men who had been among the Prophet’s closest companions, and had played a leading role in Mecca and Madina. They are known as *rashidun*, the ‘rightly guided’ caliphs, and their period of rule would be just as formative as that of the Prophet himself. Muslims would define themselves and their theology according to the way they assessed the turbulent, glorious and tragic events of these years.’⁷

These four Khalifas also left their personal examples as an additional source of guidance and inspiration for Muslims for generations to come. [Detailed accounts to follow in subsequent editions]

Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) has many distinctions including being one of the first friend of the Prophet^(saw) to accept Islam at the hands of the

Prophet^(saw). But perhaps the greatest distinction is that of being the only one of Khilafat Rashida who has been mentioned in the Quran, though not by name but by inference. He was the one who accompanied the Prophet^(saw) when they migrated from Makkah and were forced to take shelter in a cave from the pursuing Makkans⁸.

His Khilafah lasted two years but it was instrumental in uniting the Muslims after the immense void left by the demise of the Prophet^(saw). He guided the Muslims through the Riddah (Apostasy) Wars – wars that were ‘entirely political and economic’ although many of the rebels felt impelled to give their revolts a religious justification⁹. Through this he was able to secure the Arabian peninsula. He also defended Arabia from the Persians as a result of which a significant section of the Persian empire came under his rule.

He was known for his benevolence and was not one to take brutal reprisals against his enemies. His efforts managed to ensure that Islam survived with a renewed pledge of loyalty from the tribes that had sought to break away. This

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was a huge achievement at such a critical juncture in Islamic history.

The second Khalifa was Hadhrat Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab^(ra) whose khilafah lasted for ten years (634-644). Under his noble rule Islam made huge strides in spreading beyond Arabia; in particular the Persian and Byzantine empires came under Muslim rule, thus fulfilling a prophecy of the Prophet^(saw)¹⁰. It is important to note that such progress was not made with the intention of spreading the faith of Islam by force. The Arabs 'were not impelled by the ferocious power of 'Islam' nor was Islam imposed on its subjects at sword-point¹¹. Its expansion was linked to the growth of its domain which in the earlier period was an inherent part of the Khalifa's responsibility, as he was the spiritual and political leader of Muslims. He was accountable for ensuring the treaties with different tribes and empires were honoured and that Muslim lands were defended. Many people embraced Islam, and the spread of Islam at a fast pace. At the same time more people became aware of and respected Muslims for permitting absolute freedom of religion. Indeed, the

People of the Book were given special protection alongside Muslims.

Hadhrat Umar's^(ra) success in leading Islam through this period of expansion was reflected by an additional title of being *Amirul Momineen* (Commander of the Faithful). He too retained a deep sense of justice and wisdom in his leadership. For example after his victory in the battle of Jerusalem in 637, he was invited to pray in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It would certainly have been a sign of victory for Muslims and a defining moment for the Christians of their defeat, yet he declined and chose to pray elsewhere just to ensure that Christians would not be offended. He was also passionate about the welfare of his people.

He established many of the institutions that have since been replicated across the Muslims world including :

- the establishment of a consultative council Majlis Shura,
- the reorganisation of the entire State into provinces to facilitate administration,

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- the establishment of a treasury and an effective means for collection and distribution of funds and resources,
- the introduction of the Islamic Hijri Calendar,
- the establishment of courts of justice, State Allowances, Child Allowances
- the construction of state buildings and bridges,
- the formal development of agriculture

Of all these perhaps the most significant and important was the appointment of a committee to elect the next khalifa so ensuring that khilafah itself would remain, as long as people remained righteous.

He was succeeded by Hadhrat Uthman^(ra) and it was under his khilafat (644-656) that standard copies of the Holy Qur'an were prepared (from the ones compiled by Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra)) and sent to all the provinces of the state. He was well-known for his concern for the poor and also is credited to have established the first navy in the Islamic empire. He oversaw the continued expansion which in fact reached its peak under his khilafat.

The last of the Rightly-Guided Khalifas was Hadhrat Ali^(ra) who was also the cousin of the Holy Prophet^(saw). His khilafat (656-661) was faced with new challenges from various factions that had sought to gain power for themselves. Whilst the core of Muslims remained firmly aligned to the Khalifa, the expanded territories invited the challenge of ensuring the same degree of spirituality of Muslims across the empire, and the strain was becoming evident. In fact these challenges were also prophesied in Sura Al-Nasr in the Qur'an (the last chapter to be revealed) in which the victory of Islam was set out together with a note of caution as it included the telling phrase 'and seek forgiveness'. It reads:

When the help of Allah comes and the victory and thou seest men entering the religion of Allah in troops glorify thy Lord, with His praise, and seek forgiveness of Him. Surely He is Oft-Returning with compassion.
(Ch.110: Vs.2-4)

If the glory and success of Islam were being foretold then why the need to seek forgiveness? We know

Quotes about Khilafat

Prophet Muhammad^(saw)

‘Prophethood shall remain among you as long as God wills. He will bring about its end and follow it with Khilafat on the precepts of Prophethood for as long as He wills...’

(Masnad-e-Ahmad)

Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra)

‘God has appointed me as Khalifa among you in order that I may create brotherly unity among you and establish the faith.’

Hadhrat Umar^(ra)

‘Anyone who needs monetary help, should come to me, as God has made me the Treasurer and Disburser.’

Hadhrat Uthman^(ra)

‘I am not going to part with this robe of Khilafat which God Almighty has bestowed upon me.

Hadhrat Ali^(ra)

‘The people who have sworn their oath of allegiance to me are the same who swore a similar oath to Abu Bakr, using the same formula as before....The consultative voting was effected by Muhajirin and Ansar and once they agreed to the appointment of a Khalifa as their leader, it attains the seal of God’s pleasure and approval.

(All four quotes above from An Exposition of Some Criticisms Against Khilafat-i-Rashida, by Maulana Sheikh Mubarak Ahmad, Published by The London Mosque 1979)

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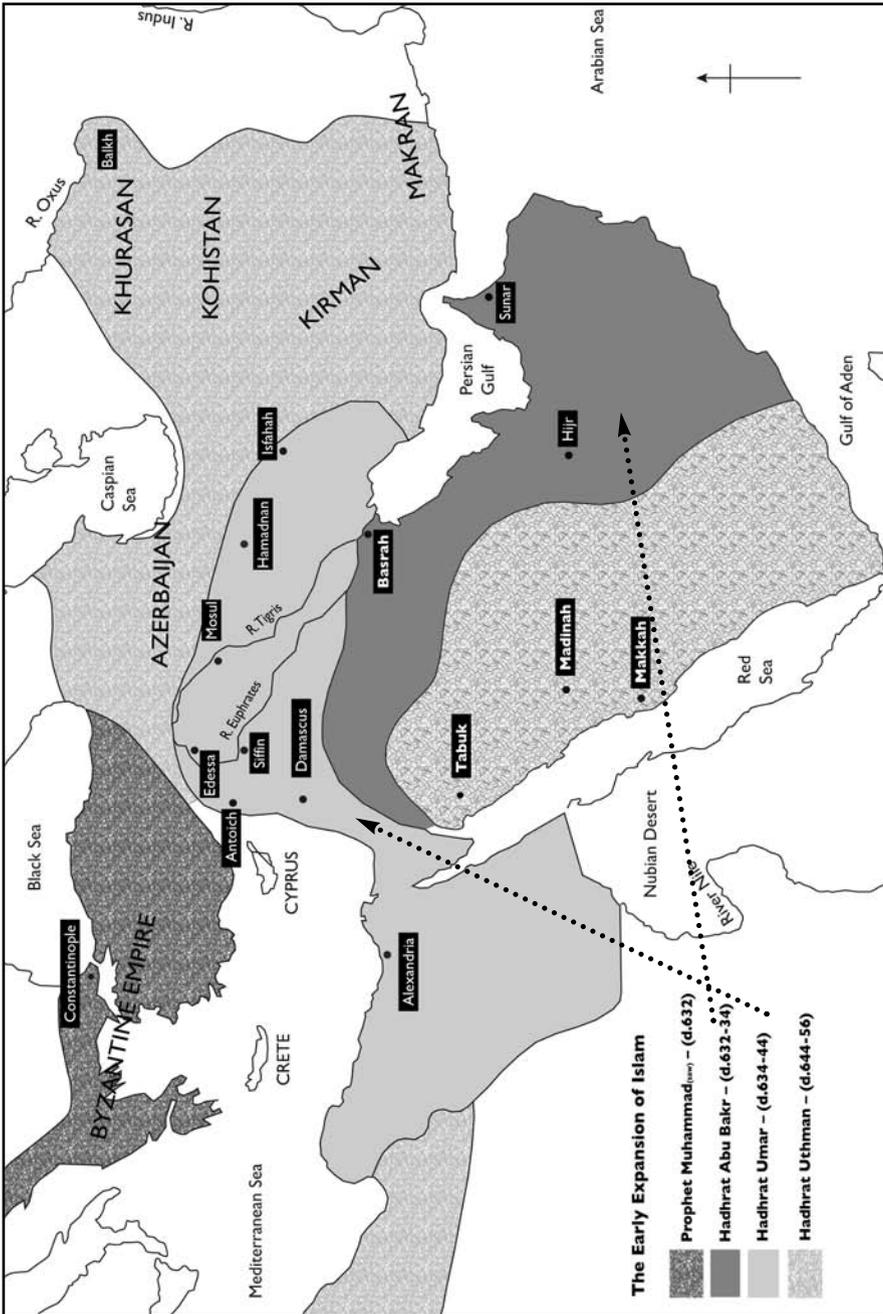
that the victories and challenges certainly began during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad^(saw) but the challenges became a harsh reality during the khilafat of Hadhrat Ali^(ra). The inability to meet the demands of the moral training of such large numbers of Muslims meant it was difficult for them to appreciate and adopt the finer qualities of Islam that would enable them to attain social peace. It was this inability to cope with the sheer numbers joining Islam in such a short space of time to which the Qur'an pointed. It was impossible for the new Muslims to attain the same high degree of understanding and righteousness. This created great difficulties for the Ummah (followers). In particular the position of the one Khalifa in an expanded empire created a desire for leadership amongst others and this put them on a slippery slope away from the blessings of khilafah.

This deviation eventually led to Mu'awiyah breaking away from Hadhrat Ali^(ra) and setting himself up as Khalifa in Jerusalem. This was accompanied by the emergence of the *Kharijites* (the 'seceders') who sought to

challenge the authority of the Khalifa and to press ahead with their own understanding of leadership. An atmosphere of hostility and contempt replaced the spirit of sacrifice and unity and these positions continued to harden until no hope was left amongst some for a return to the brotherhood that had prevailed at the time of the Prophet^(saw).

The golden thread that ran through the Khulafa-e-Rashideen and bound them together was their unstinting loyalty to Islam, their nobility of character and adherence to the teachings and practices of Muhammad^(saw). They also did not let anything detract them from defending the honour of the office of khilafat and some made the ultimate sacrifice in its defence. This loyalty enabled them to make great progress but they also faced great difficulties. Yet, despite this, they remained true to their faith and never let personal ambition encroach upon their holy mission. Indeed the Khilafat Rashida had no desire to lead but as they had been bestowed this position by God they led with sincerity of heart knowing that they were accountable to Him for their tenure in office.

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But with the increase in Muslim population and territory, an ambition and desire for leadership became irresistible to those who sought to obtain worldly honour. This is reflected in Mu'awiyah's own words who said:

'As for Abu Bakr he did not want the world...As for Umar, the world wanted him but he did not want it. As for us, we have rolled over in it (like an animal)'¹²

It may be worth reminding ourselves here of the nobility of the early Muslims that made them worthy of khilafah. The Holy Prophet^(saw) had carried out a tremendous revolution in the Arabs and had transformed them from an idolatrous and tribally proud society to a brotherhood based on the love of God and service to humanity. The sacrifices and moral example of the Companions reflected an amazing degree of spiritual advancement. People who were avowed enemies of truth and were determined to wipe out Islam became its staunchest allies who were prepared to sacrifice their lives for the sake of truth and for the sake of Islam. Such was the moral and spiritual standard

of those Muslims. In that situation we can see that it was inevitable that God's promise of khilafah would be fulfilled. It was fulfilled because of the very nature and rank of the companions.

Once people gave way to their selfish ambitions for power the bounty of khilafah was taken from them. Having undoubtedly benefited from the expansion of Islam under the Khilafat Rashida, they were beset with difficulties, as their focus shifted away from the preservation of religious values that was characterised by the Khulafa. They, therefore, became undeserving of the blessing of true spiritual khilafah.

This turn of events was in accordance with God's promise that khilafah was only promised to those who believed and did good deeds. It was, therefore, conditional on them remaining united as a body of righteous people who were devoted to God and His message. Once that was lost, so was the institution of a blessed khilafat.

From Blessed Khilafat to Temporal Rule

Following the death of Hadhrat

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Ali^(ra) the Muslim community's sense of spiritual unity quickly started to fade with different factions taking different directions. This resulted in the shift in style of Muslim leadership from spiritual Khilafat to other forms of rule and as time went on the essence of righteousness diminished. Whilst there was some useful progress under subsequent caliphs, (e.g. some commentators have credited Mu'awiya with providing political stability whilst leader) it was the change in focus away from God that was their ultimate undoing. Mu'awiyah's appointment of his son, Yazid, as his successor reveals an inner weakness as he sought to secure familial power rather than religious purity.

Undoubtedly, the failure of leadership did not mean that all Muslims had abandoned Islam, but they did not retain within them the purity of heart and brotherhood to function as one body of faithful. Different groups elected their own leaders and gradually they drifted apart despite sharing the same core faith.

It is relevant to note here a hadith of the Prophet^(saw) that had foretold of

this chapter of history. It is narrated in *Masnad Ahmad* that:

'The Holy Prophet^(saw) said: "Prophethood shall remain among you as long as God wills. He will bring about its end and follow it with Khilafat on the precepts of Prophethood for as long as He wills and then bring about its end. Kingship shall then follow and remain as long as God wills and then come to an end. There shall then be tyranny which shall remain as long as God wills and come to an end upon His decree. ..."'

This clearly states the shift in style and spirituality of the leadership that was to follow. The noble and blessed khilafat was to be followed by forms of temporal rule and then descend into dictatorship. This did not mean that all subsequent leaders would lack any spirituality or goodness but the majority of them would not be as mindful of the teachings of Islam and the Qur'an. From this point on, the leadership was mostly focused on securing political rule and political gain and tribal or national interest rather than securing nobility and peace.

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What was predicted in the Prophet's(saw) hadith came to pass. In fact, it succinctly reflects the Islamic history from 661 to the present day.

This is probably why when most non-Muslims think of the word *khalifa* or more accurately its anglicised form *Caliphate*, they think of those who led Muslims (and still held on to the title of Khalifa) during the long period after the Rashidun. It certainly has stronger political connotation – something that the history and record of those 'caliphs' would bear out.

The orientalist also have played a role in emphasising the political nature of such rulers and wrongly tarred all kinds of Muslim rulers, caliphs and the Khalifat Rashida with the same brush. An example of this is found in Sir Thomas Arnold's book *The Caliphate*. He writes:

'For understanding the status of the Caliph, it is important therefore to recognise that he is pre-eminently a political functionary, these functions do not imply the possession of any spiritual powers setting him thereby apart from the rest of the faithful.'¹³

When one considers the spiritual rank and moral character of the Rashidun, the contrast with the above could not be greater.

As noted, this misunderstanding has prevailed to the extent that the word Caliph carries with it its own meaning with an emphasis on civil and political affairs rather than moral, religious and spiritual affairs¹⁴: a concept which has over 1300 years of history behind it, making it one that is hard to change!

The span of the caliphate after Hadhrat Ali^(ra) included the rule of the Ummayyad Dynasty (661-750) and the Abbassid Dynasty (750 – 1258). During the Abbassid era, from the tenth century onwards Muslims established themselves in distinct regions, each with its own caliph. Over time these included the Samanids, Hamdanids, Fatimids, Ayyubids, the Marmelukes and Moghuls. The last era of caliphate, normally referred to, is that of the Ottomans whose rule lasted (nominally at least) until 1924 although it had ceased to have any meaningful power and authority before then.

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However, it is important to remember that not all Muslims since Khilafat Rashida had forgotten what Islam had taught them, for many continued to practise and benefit from it. There were many who became out-standing thinkers in their own right and whose contributions have shaped the modern world in many ways. Furthermore there were also spiritual reformers (*mujaddids*) who appeared in every century to guide Muslims aright, but the unity of the Ummah as a whole never returned to that which existed during the time of the Khilafat Rashida and certainly not to the unity at the time of the Prophet(saw). The undeniable fact is that just as Muslims lost the blessed Khilafat Rashida, they have lost true unity.

This has resulted in there being such a fragmentation amongst the global Muslim community – each with its own theology and interpretation – that one wonders: is there any hope of turning the clock back and seeking to achieve a truly united Muslim Ummah? The world has come so far away from the time of the Prophet(saw) and has changed beyond recognition that it would appear to be nigh on

impossible. If the only dominance that Islam was destined to gain was one of numbers then whilst that seems likely is there any merit in such an achievement? Can Muslims today really attain peace with so many disparate and contending world views within the Ummah? More importantly are there any clues that guide us to a solution for the modern world?

Khilafat and Muslims today

One can sense the desperation of Muslims at a lack of global leadership. At a personal level, many know and understand the inner strength of Islam as contained in the Qur'an and the life example of the Prophet(saw) and the promise of Islam's ascendancy in securing and restoring global peace, yet the gap between this and the current vacuum of leadership seems unfathomable.

This also prompts the question that if Islam was for all time then where is the khilafat of Muslims today? After sending His perfect messenger and showing the model of khilafat in the era of Khilafat Rashidan has God now abandoned Muslims completely? More importantly can a group of

KHILAFAT IN ISLAM**SOME MUJADDIDS IN ISLAM**

The following Mujaddids (Reformers) have appeared since the time of Hadhrat Ali^(ra). With the exception of the last, none claimed to be a prophet and khalifa of the Holy Prophet^(saw)

Century	Name	Hijrah Dates	Christian Era
1st	Umar bin Abdul Aziz	60 - 101	717 - 720
2nd	Ahmad bin Hanbal	164 - 241	780 - 855
3rd	Abul Hasan Ashari	260 - 324	873 - 935
4th	Abu Bakr Baqlani	? - 403	? - 1013
5th	Al Ghazali	450 - 505	1058 - 1111
6th	Abdul Qadir Jilani	470 - 561	1077 - 1166
7th	Ibne Taimiyya	661 - 728	1263 - 1328
8th	Ibne Hajar Asqalani	773 - 852	1372 - 1449
9th	Jalal-ad-Din as-Sayuti	849 - 911	1445 - 1505
10th	Muhammad Tahir Gujarati	963 - 1014	1556 - 1605
11th	Ahmad Sirhindi	971- 1034	1564 - 1624
12th	Shah Wali Ullah	1113 - 1175	1702 - 1762
13th	Ahmad Brelwi	1201 - 1246	1786 - 1831
14th	Mirza Ghulam Ahmad ^(as)	1251 - 1326	1835 - 1908

disparate believers ever come together and elect a Khalifa?

Some in the last century, such as Dr

Allamah Sir Muhammad Iqbal, have argued that it will certainly be within the scope of Muslims to unite and progress as they have the

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perfect Book. They would have learnt from the past mistakes and thus eventually reach a state of maturity required to accomplish this task. In this respect, some Muslims have tried to establish movements and philosophies as a desperate attempt to unify Muslims, but conventional wisdom goes against such vain attempts at such a monumental challenge. Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(ru) dismisses such philosophy in a characteristically incisive manner:

‘If ‘maturity of man’ is taken to mean that he becomes independent in drawing his conclusions from the study of scriptures, then there must ensue a perfect unity of agreement on all the fundamental aspects of religious teachings. Alas, what we observe in real life fails miserably to support this view. Muslims, the proud recipients of the last perfect Book, are no less divided among themselves in the matter of interpretation than are the peoples of all other religions. To what avail, therefore, is the so-called maturity of man? The history of religion proves that people once

split into sects and schisms have never been reunified by human effort alone. The same inevitably applies to the Muslims today. Without the agency of a Divine Reformer, they cannot be assembled again under the single flag of Unity. ...

‘The existence of about seventy-two doctrinal divisions among them, despite a well-preserved Book and a well-documented record of traditions, throws a dismal light on the Iqbalian philosophy of the maturity of man.’

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(ru) then notes:

‘Their differences are not merely marginal. They are deep-rooted, further multiplying and proliferating as time goes by. Add to this the moral destitution prevailing in the Muslim world and the tragedy of their lifeless existence becomes all the more pathetic. Commit their survival to the maturity of their intellect and perform ablution for their funeral rites, “ashes to ashes,

dust to dust and earth to earth – Amen!”¹⁵

What is also implied here is that if it were possible then would Muslims not also come together on other critical issues and act as one body with one understanding and one aim? The truth is that it is not possible as they have drifted too far from the holy path. A single khalifa for the whole Ummah has not existed for the past 1400 years since Hadhrat Ali^(ra). This underlines the scale of such a task and the improbability of one being elected now.

The solution to this conundrum is found in the Qur’an itself and in the way that God has helped mankind before. As has been seen in the history of religion, it reaffirms the link between khilafat and prophethood.

History tells us that once the link with prophethood is broken then khilafat cannot continue or emerge on its own. It is only through the institution of prophethood itself that the chain of khilafat is restored. The clearest historic precedence for this is that of the Mosaic dispensation.

A closer examination of the Mosaic dispensation reveals that many Israelite prophets came to protect the Mosaic Law. Many of them were in essence the khalifas of Moses^(as). It is also interesting to note that the last prophet of the Mosaic dispensation was Jesus^(as) who was also the Messiah that was promised to the Jews¹⁶. His mission was one of purely reviving the true spirit and understanding of the Mosaic law and not to add to it.¹⁷ He was therefore also another Khalifa of Moses^(as). His advent had nothing to do with the Jewish clergy at that time since they had no hand in his appointment to office. In fact they were strongly opposed to it as his drive to rejuvenate the Mosaic Law was a direct challenge to their authority. Thus the khilafat of the Mosaic period was revived by God through the advent of His prophet Jesus^(as).

This is relevant to Muslims because on several occasions the Muslims have been likened to the Jews before them¹⁸ and this serves as a prophetic reminder also that the difficulties they face will be similar¹⁹. This also gives hope in the sense that it also sets out the solution.

At the time of Jesus^(as) it was not within the scope of all the Jews to unite for the sake of spiritual advancement. They had drifted too far apart and consequently foregone their right to elect their khalifa. In the Qur'an we are told that khilafat is promised to those who believe and do good deeds – by which is meant that those who uphold the true spirit and teachings and practices of God's law. The condition of the Jews at that time was far removed from this so it was only out of God's mercy and in the fulfilment of His promise that a prophet (and khalifa of Moses^(as)) was sent to set them on the right path.

The same is the case with Islam and Muslims. A casual glance shows the complete state of disarray and disharmony. Those who should be leading their community towards peace are, with rare exception, failing to do so and instead lead for the sake of personal gain or glory. So where and how can God's promise be fulfilled today?

The obvious link is the issue of prophethood. The greatness of Moses^(as) was not enough to save

and guide the Jews: At the end of his dispensation another prophet had been raised and sent by God. This also reflects the degree of mercy and grace of God for the Jews. It would, therefore, be unthinkable that God would not act with similar mercy for the Ummah of the greatest Prophet, Muhammad^(saw), especially as his message was for the whole world.

No doubt this is why Muslims have been taught two specific prayers that were to act both as a warning for them and also as a source of comfort and hope.

Prayers for Prophethood and Khilafat

The Qur'an sheds light on this matter in its very first chapter. Al-Fatihah that is also known as Ummul Qur'an, (i.e. the Mother of the Qur'an) reveals God's profound wisdom. For in this small chapter he has compacted an immense treasure house of knowledge. It holds the essence of the entire message, teachings and guidance of the Holy Qur'an. It is of little surprise, therefore, that a critical problem that was to face Muslims of the latter days is dealt with upfront.

Furthermore, being a prayer that is recited over thirty times daily in regular prayers of a Muslim, Al-Fatihah has left little room for Muslims to plead ignorance to the solution for their current problems. The key lies in verse seven in which Muslims pray to be guided in:

...the right path - The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings...

The natural question is what is this path? This question has been answered in the Qur'an itself in Chapter 4 verses 69-70 which state:

And We would surely have guided them in the right path. And whoso obeys Allah and this Messenger of His shall be among those on whom Allah has bestowed His blessings, namely, the Prophets, the Truthful, the Martyrs, and the Righteous and excellent companions are these.

In other words, it reveals that in order to be one of those who receives God's blessings Muslims pray to be guided in the path that leads to the spiritual ranks of the

Prophets, Truthful, Martyrs and Righteous. It is not a selfish desire for prophethood that is captured and expressed here (since appointment of prophets is purely God's preserve), rather it is a desire to be set on the noble path and for the Ummah (since it states *Guide us*) to be of such purity that in it there are people who reflect the qualities mentioned. This includes prophethood.

Since Hadhrat Ali^(ra) we can cite examples of Muslims who were Truthful, Martyrs and Righteous but what of Prophets? Can we cite even a single one despite being taught this prayer? It is this spiritual progeny of the Truthful, Martyrs, Righteous and Prophets that was promised to Prophet Muhammad^(saw) in verse 4 of chapter 108 Al-Kauthar, in which God declared:

Surely, it is thy enemy who is without issue. (Ch.108: V.4)

The Prophet^(saw) was promised that his progeny would be blessed so much so that his spiritual successors would be so superior than his opponents and would leave them in awe.

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A further prayer is found in the *Durood*, the invocation of peace and blessings on the Prophet(saw) (also a part of salat in Islam). That prayers implores God that:

‘Bless, O Allah, Muhammad and his people as Thou didst bless Abraham and his people. Thou art indeed Praiseworthy, the Exalted.’

Again we can see that a parallel is drawn between Abraham^(as) (and his people) and Muhammad^(saw) (and his people). The prayer acknowledges Abraham’s blessed progeny that included the Mosaic dispensation, which consisted of not just one but many prophets and khalifas.

So in the same way that prophets and khalifas were deemed essential by God to progress and protect the Mosaic Law how could it be that prophets and khalifas were not needed for Muhammad’s^(saw) dispensation? Were the Rashidun sufficient for all time? Absolutely not and this is the reason why God’s promise of khilafat in Sura Al-Nur is not fixed to any one time period.

Numerous scholars supported this view and one such scholar was Hadhrat Muhyiuddin Ibn Arabi who observed:

‘From the study and contemplation of the Durood we have arrived at the definite conclusion that there shall, from among the Muslims, certainly be persons whose status, in the matter of prophethood, shall advance to the level of prophets, if Allah pleases. But they shall not be given any book of Law.’²⁰

This proves that in seeking to secure similar blessings in the dispensation of Muhammad^(saw) similar bounties are also being sought. Such bounties would also serve to elevate the status of Prophet Muhammad^(saw) even more since the scope of the Mosaic Law was limited to the Israelites whereas the scope of the Holy Prophet^(saw) and Islam is universal and for all time. This makes the task that much greater too.

Having taught Muslims these prayers, Allah admonishes Muslims to have *firm faith in what is yet to come* (Ch.2:V.5) which is a prophecy that God will not leave them or His religion rather He

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would revive His message in the latter days.

Once the link to prophethood is restored then Allah's words make clear that khilafat will continue, provided the community remains righteous.

So, keeping all this in mind, if we look at the decline of Muslims after Khilafate Rashida and note the state of Muslims today then can we conclude that the prayers of the prophet and of countless Muslims have gone unanswered?

The answer is a definitive no and there are two reasons. Firstly, the Qur'an tells us of God's promise. It is impossible for Him to break His promise. Secondly the very hadith that sets out the emergence of Khilafat Rashida and the fate of the subsequent leadership, also sets out a promise for the latter days. To remind ourselves, the first part in Masnad Ahmad stated that:

'The Holy Prophet^(saw) said: "Prophethood shall remain among you as long as God wills. He will bring about its end and follow it with Khilafat on the precepts of Prophethood for as

long as He wills and then bring about its end. Kingship shall then follow and remain as long as God wills and then come to an end. There shall then be tyranny which shall remain as long as God wills and come to an end upon His decree. ..." '

This hadith then ended with a promise of God's help:

"There will then emerge Khilafat on the precept of Prophethood" The Holy Prophet said no more.'

It very clearly reminds us of the link with prophethood. True khilafat was destined for Muslims but their decline and subsequent state was to be such that it was not within their power to establish khilafat. As God had done so with Mosaic dispensation so would He again offer hope to mankind through the Holy Prophet's^(saw) dispensation. Thus the blessed light of khilafat of the latter days would only be realised through the prism of prophethood that would appear to revive the true Islam. The hallmarks of such a prophet would be that he would be a Muslim, he would be subservient to Prophet

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Muhammad^(saw) and through him a new era of blessed khilafat would emerge.

The task for Muslims therefore is to search for one whose belief in God and service to Islam was of such high calibre and of such purity that he became deserving of God's blessings and manifested in him God's answer to our prayers for a spiritual guide and heir to Muhammad^(saw). Furthermore the hadith and the Qur'an make clear that at such a time a new community of followers will arise and devote themselves to serve for the sake of righteousness and peace to the extent that the bounty of khilafat that was lost to the Muslims for 1400 years is regained.

The question thus remains that has there been any such devoted servant of Islam who has claimed to be Divinely guided and who has declared his prophethood in fulfilment of these prophecies? Has his arrival generated a similar response from the Muslim Ummah as the Jews responded to Jesus^(as) and his followers? And equally importantly, has such a noble personality, through his closeness to God, been chosen by God as the

one through whom the institution of a blessed khilafat is restarted for the sole purpose of upholding Islam and the honour of Muhammad^(saw)?

Amazingly enough, in the whole of the Muslim Ummah – from the time of Hadhrat Ali^(ra) to the present day – only one person has made such a claim and he and the Khalifas after him and the community of followers have prospered and flourished under Divine protection like no other community since the period of Khilafat Rashida. It is therefore imperative to take a look at his claims, mission and community to see how it matches the era of the Prophet^(saw) and the Khilafat Rashida.

The Awaited Prophet

Prophethood itself is a bounty for a true believer, but it is none except the select few that can ever attain it. With God's final message of Islam revealed to Prophet Muhammad^(saw) one thing was certain that any new prophet could only appear in his Ummah for no new religion was needed, only a reformer to rekindle its true spirit. In the same way that Jesus^(as) served the Mosaic Law the prophet of the latter days would be

completely subservient to Islam and Prophet Muhammad^(saw), and be a khalifa of Muhammad^(saw) with the stature and status of prophethood granted by God. Anything to the contrary would go against the tradition of God.

The sole claimant to prophethood and to being the Messiah (as the Mahdi in some Muslim texts) promised to Islam in the latter days (and indeed all religions) was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) (1835-1908). He was a well-respected and devout Muslim who through his writings such as the epoch making *Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya* invigorated the Muslims with a new sense of belief and conviction and he energised them with the true understanding of Islam. Islam was once more resurrected as a living religion that offered hope and salvation for not just Muslims but all who wished to benefit from it. In his defence of Islam he wrote over eighty books. He was equally critical of Muslims who did not live by the true principles of Islam. Thus, his mission was to remove the malpractice and revive the righteousness and purity that Islam offered.

Like prophets before him, up to the point he received the Divine call, he made no claim to such spiritual status, and in fact recoiled at the idea that he was even worthy of such divine accolade. He saw his service as nothing but a duty of a sincere believer and servant of Muhammad^(saw). It was only after being blessed with converse with the Almighty and being told time and again in no uncertain terms that he was the Messiah and Mahdi and the prophet for the latter days that he stood forth and announced his prophethood to the world and established the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. He cared little for the hardships that were to face him (of which there were many) instead placing his utmost trust in God at Whose threshold he now lay.

His claim to prophethood can be readily seen in his following statements:

‘Since I myself have witnessed the clear fulfilment of about 150 prophecies, how can I deny the title of *Nabi* or *Rasul* about me? Since Allah the Most High has Himself bestowed these titles upon me, why should I forsake them or fear anyone except

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Him? I declare in the name of God Who has sent me – and cursed are those who fabricate lies about Him – that he has sent me as the promised Messiah.’
(*Eik Ghalati ka Izalah, Ruhani Khaza'ian*, vol.18, p.210)

‘I declare in the name of God Who controls my life that he has sent me and he has granted me the title *Nabi*. He has called me the Promised Messiah, and he has shown great signs for my truthfulness which number about three hundred thousand.’
(*Tatimma Haqiqatul Wahi, Ruhani Khaza'ian*, vol.22, p.503)

There are numerous other statements of his that testify to his claim to prophethood on the basis of Divine instruction, but he was also equally clear that his prophethood was not independent of Muhammad^(saw) rather it was only as a mere slave of the Holy Prophet^(saw). He firmly believed in Prophet Muhammad^(saw) as *Khataman Nabiyyeen* (Seal of the Prophets) and at every moment he would seek to preserve and defend the honour and greatness of the Holy Prophet^(saw). He was also clear that

any blessing that he had received was purely because of his devotion to the cause of the Holy Prophet^(saw) and nothing else for it was his firm belief that it was the only through Islam and the Holy Prophet^(saw) that mankind could attain true peace.

He affirmed that:

‘I have received full measure of the blessing that were bestowed on the prophets and honoured ones of God before me purely as a result of the Grace of Allah and not due to any merit of my own. And it was not possible for me to get this blessing if I did not follow the ways of my Master and Lord, the honour of the Prophets and best of them all, the Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. So, whatever I achieved resulted from following his path. I understand – based on my true and complete knowledge – that no one can reach God without following His Prophet^(saw), nor can he have a share of the perfect understanding.’
(*Haqiqatul Wahi, Ruhani Khaza'ian*, vol.22, pp.64-65)

And further:

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‘This eminence has been granted to me because of my following the Holy Prophet^(saw). Had I not been one of his followers and had I not been following his teaching faithfully, I could have never achieved this high status of communion with Allah, even though my good deeds had piled up to the height of the mountains. This is because no law-bearing prophet can ever be raised, but a non-law-bearing prophet can still appear. But he must always be a follower of the Holy Prophet^(saw). I am therefore a follower as well as a prophet.’
(*Tajalliyati Ilahiyya*, p.24)

This should put beyond doubt his resolute conviction about his position in relation to the Holy Prophet^(saw) and his claim to prophethood as well. This prophethood also had the aspect of khilafat of the Holy Prophet^(saw). It is relevant here to note the following hadith in which when referring to the advent of the Promised Messiah^(as) the Holy Prophet^(saw) instructed his followers that:

‘...he [the Promised Messiah] will be my *Khalifa* from among my followers after me...

Remember, anyone who gets the honour of meeting him, he must convey my *salam* to him.’

(*Al-Mo'jam Al-Awsat Lit-tabarani*, Manismuhu ‘Isa. *Al-Mo'jam-us-Saghir Lit-tabarani*, Manismuhu ‘Isa)

On another occasion he said:

‘When you find the Mahdi, perform Bai’at (pledge of allegiance) at his hands. You must go to him, even if you have to reach him across icebound mountains on your knees. He is the Mahdi and the Khalifa of Allah’

(*Sunan Ibn Maja, Kitab ul Fitan*, Vol.2, p.1367)

On many occasions, the Promised Messiah^(as) also clarified that he was also the second spiritual advent of Jesus^(as) and therefore underlining a strong similarity between his mission and the mission of the Mosaic Messiah. The difference in emphasis was that whereas Jesus^(as) came to revive the Mosaic teachings the Promised Messiah^(as) came to revive Islam.

He said:

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‘This humble one is appointed by the Omnipotent and Most Glorious God to work for the betterment of mankind in the manner of the Israeli prophet of Nazareth, the Messiah, with extreme humility, meekness, modesty, love and courtesy. To those who are unaware of the right way, I am to show them the straight path through which they can achieve true Salvation, and feel in this very world the signs of having heavenly life, and experience the illumination of being accepted and loved by God.’

(Tabligh Risalat, Vol.1, p.11)

Further proof of the truth of his mission can be found in the fact that it was at his hands that the blessed institution of khilafat was revived. His example and the example of the community that responded to his call bore striking similarities to the period of Islam during the time of the Holy Prophet(saw) and the Khilafat Rashida. The direction in which he was taking his followers is also an amazing reflection of early Islam. He said:

‘And here I am going to tell you about the first thing that

develops in the heart as a result of the honest and perfect following of the Holy Prophet(saw); so know it that it is the righteous heart. The love of the world departs from the heart, and it desires an eternal and unending pleasure. Then, as a consequence of this righteous heart, a pure and perfect divine love is acquired. And all these blessings are received as inheritance from following the Holy Prophet(saw).’

(Haqiqatul Wahi, Ruhani Khazain, vol.22, pp.64-65)

What is intriguing about this is that he set out the rejection of this world as a means of attaining righteousness. It is this spirit of devotion and love of God that was the key to the blessings of khilafat in early Islam and it is the same that was to secure it in the latter days. This quality was admitted by even those who had moved to undermine khilafat during the time of the Rashidun. You may recall that Mu’awiyah himself observed that whilst the Rashidun did not want this world Mu’awiyah and those of his ilk ‘rolled over in it (like an animal)’. How telling that the Promised Messiah(as) who was the

chosen one to revive khilafat strongly cautioned his followers to remained focused on God and its ultimate accountability to Him, and use this as a means to pursue righteousness, thus striking at the heart of the worldly ambition that had removed this bounty from Muslims in the first era!

Revival of Khilafat

This revival of khilafat by the Promised Messiah^(as) is the final and crucial piece of this jigsaw of Islam's revival. The manner in which he did this was to seek to ensure that his followers would remain faithful to both the teachings and the spirit of Islam. This required them to strive with their body and soul for Islam and make the necessary sacrifices. He was aware that his immediate companions had received God's blessings by sharing his company and by learning Islam through his example but he also looked to protect his community from drifting away for generations to come.

This can be seen through his prophecy and teachings for the community that related to his demise and beyond. He foretold

that in line with God's promise in Sura Al-Nur, there was good news for the righteous in that they would see a revival of khilafat, and provided they remained true to their faith this bounty would remain with them until the end of mankind.

His advent had demonstrated the first manifestation of God's mercy for this age, and assured them that after his demise God would bless the righteous with the Second Manifestation of His mercy. He wrote:

'For it is essential for you to see the Second Manifestation, too, and its coming is better for you because it is everlasting the continuity of which will not end till the Day of Judgement. And the second Manifestation cannot come unless I depart. But when I depart, then God will send this second Manifestation for you which shall always remain with you as it is promised by God in *Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya*.'²¹

He also made clear that it was under Khilafat that the global success of Islam would be seen for he said:

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‘God desires to draw all those people whether they belong to Europe or Asia who inhabit various habitations of the world, and who have virtuous nature, to the Unity of God and unite men, His servants, in one Faith. This is the very purpose of God to achieve which I have been sent to the world.’²²

To this end he urged followers to adopt a life of those who may be deemed worthy of khilafat and this was set out in his Will (*Al Wasiiyyat*). This focused primarily on the spiritual and moral values and the need to be ever-vigilant in seeking God’s protection from the distractions of this world.

‘And, totally shedding all base desires of the self, choose for the sake of winning the pleasure of God that path compared to which no path can be narrower and straiter. Do not fall in love with the pleasures of the world, for they take you away from God.’²³

Added to this he urged people to make an extraordinary sacrifice of their wealth and time for the sake of their faith. This was very much in

line with the Qur’anic teaching that:

Never shall you attain to righteousness unless you spend out of that which you love.
(Ch.3; V.93)

It is this righteousness that would enable khilafat to be preserved and that is exactly what happened.

Following his demise in 1908, his community, like the community of the Companions of the Prophet(saw), gathered and sought Divine protection and blessings and elected a khalifa to continue the revival of Islam that was initiated by the Promised Messiah(as). This election of Hadhrat Hakim Maulvi Nooruddeen Sahib(ra) (who also happened to be the first person who accepted Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad(as) as a prophet and the messiah promised for the latter days) was the final step in the fulfilment of God’s promise of Khilafat for Muslims, for the final link between prophethood and khilafat had been restored and would continue to flourish and progress as long as the community retained its righteousness and its faith in God.

Khilafat Ahmadiyya – another era of Khilafat Rashida

Very much mirroring the experience and success of Khilafat Rashida the new khilafat was blessed with immense Divine help and protection. It was a beacon of hope that was destined to guide the whole Ummah back to the right path and to this day its progress and success in the face of adversity reflects the Divine succour that it has been granted.

If we take a glimpse at the history of Khilafat Ahmadiyya then we can see that the Khalifas indeed have been granted success as promised by Allah. The Ahmadiyya Jama'at has grown at a phenomenal rate – unparalleled since the rise of Islam itself – and it has established missions in the cause of Islam in every corner of the world. Despite severe persecution, Allah has remained firm to His promise and granted His Khalifas success upon success. The call for unity – and the unification of mankind is only being advanced and achieved at the hands of Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya.

The Khalifas have led the cause for raising the flag of the Unity of Allah and for the establishment of peace

the world over. Unity that was maintained during the precarious time of Hadhrat Maulvi Nurruddin Sahib^(ra), the foundations of expansion that were laid down during the khilafat of Hadhrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad^(ra), the wise counsel that guided and protected the Jama'at and called for the global service of mankind during the time of Hadhrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad^(ru), the prolific expansion and impact that was achieved during the khilafat of Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(ru) and the continuing success and noble leadership, at a global level, of Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad^(aba), all make up a resounding portfolio of evidence of the truth of Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya and its ongoing success in establishing the religion of Islam in all corners of the world.

If we compare this to the experience of the Muslims over the same 100 years who have failed to recognise Khilafat – then we see a stark contrast. Khilafat Ahmadiyya has resulted in success reflecting the benefits of Divine favour, whereas the condition of Muslims who have denied this khilafat has suffered nothing but continued fragmentation and frustration. This too is in

line with the Qur'anic verdict which whilst assuring the success of Khilafat, notes that such khilafat will not be accepted by all for it adds a prophetic note of caution by saying that,

Then whoso is ungrateful after that, they will be the rebellious.
(Ch.24:V.56)

This assures us that efforts to disprove the blessed Khilafat and arrest its success will be fruitless as God promises in the Qur'an in the following verse of the same chapter, that,

Think not that those who disbelieve can frustrate Our plan...(Ch.24:V.58)

Thus, *Khilafat Ahmadiyya* stands unique in the world today in that it represents a community that has recognised the prophet of this age and witnessed the khilafat that followed it – exactly in line with the promise made by God in the Qur'an.

Duty of Muslims to the Khilafat

Having established the legitimacy of the institution of Khilafat Ahmadiyya, it is relevant to note

that Muslims have a duty to respond to the call of the khalifa of this age.

The primary responsibility according to the Holy Prophet^(saw) himself is to take the oath of allegiance at the hands of the Khalifa. Once that has been done, the positions of Muslims today, as it was during the period of Khilafat Rashida, is to hear and obey. Anything else would be tantamount to rejecting the instructions of the Holy Prophet^(saw) for he is reported to have said that:

‘Anyone who follows my Amir shall be regarded as having followed me, but anyone who disobeys my Amir shall be regarded as having disobeyed me.’

(The Promised Messiah^(as) published in Badr 2.6.1908)

It would be unthinkable that any Muslim would wish to be counted as one who disobeyed the Holy Prophet^(saw). So obedience to his Khalifa is an act of faith. In fact, it is such obedience that is the hallmark of a Muslim. It reflects the living response to the instruction of the Qur'an to:

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Obey Allah and obey His messenger and those who are in authority over you.

(Ch.4: V.60)

The Qur'an also emphasises the requirement of obedience with reference to khilafat. This can be gauged from the verses in Sura Al-Nur that contain the promise of khilafat. The concept of obedience is mentioned not just once but seven times in verses 52-57. This makes clear that obedience is a critical factor to the ongoing blessings of khilafat – for without this true unity is impossible. Indeed, Allah assures those who hear and obey²⁴ that they shall prosper.

In fact the first Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Jama'at, Hadhrat Hakim Maulvi Nuruddin Sahib^(ra) made clear that one's ego must be sacrificed at the altar of Khilafat for it is the same ego that will otherwise lead to one's downfall and leave one deprived of God's favours.

He described the state of a believer and his responsibility beautifully when he said that a person who makes bai'at gives up all his freedom and high flights for the sake of another. In other words you

submit yourself to serve God by presenting yourself at the service of your Khalifa²⁵.

It is by obeying the Khalifa that Muslims will be serving the cause of Islam for it is under Khilafat that Islam was promised triumph.

Khilafat and the growth of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at

Ahmadis consider themselves fortunate to have witnessed the revival of khilafat following the arrival of the Prophet of this age and is have a proud history of responding to the call of the Khalifa, as success of the Waqf-Jadid and Tehrik Jadid Schemes, the Nusrat Jehan Scheme, Waqf-e-Nau scheme have shown, to name but a few.

More recently the Khalifa has emphasised the importance of Wassiyyat. It will surprise no-one that even in this day and age when materialism rules, Ahmadi Muslims the world over are responding with full vigour to the call of the Khalifa. In the field of financial sacrifice, in fact, a Muslim's responsibility should be to reflect the example of Hadhrat Umar^(ra) who said that:

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‘Had I possessed gold and silver equal to that of the whole earth, I would have given it in the cause of Allah to please Him.’
(*Hadhrat Umar Farooq*, by R A Chowdhry, p.100)

Hadhrat Maulvi Nuruddin^(ra) himself set such a high example of such service and piety that he was praised by the Promised Messiah^(as) who said about him in his famous couplet:

‘How fortunate would it be if everyone of the Community were Nur-ud-Din. So would it be if everyone were filled with the light of faith.’²⁶

In fact if we study the lives of Khalifas themselves, before their khilafat we will find in them models of how we should discharge our responsibility in serving Khilafat Ahmadiyya, in line with the teachings of Islam.

The duty of obedience highlights another aspect of the nature of the institution of Khilafat, that it represents a bond between the Khalifa and his community. The bond will remain as strong as the commitment of the two parties

concerned. It is inconceivable to think that a Khalifa will ever diminish in his responsibility as he is chosen and appointed by God. For his Jama’at to continue to benefit from Khilafat, therefore, it is crucial that it too does not diminish in its responsibilities in remaining righteous and serving the Khalifa. In fact, God is very clear that the blessing of Khilafat is only granted to those who *believe and do good works*. The moment righteousness is lost and obedience ends, then Khilafat will be lost as well. So it is the Jama’at’s duty to remain steadfast in its faith and practices.

The spirit to serve khilafat must be that of Hadhrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad^(ra) who at the time of the demise of the Promised Messiah^(as) declared:

‘If all others should leave you and I should be left alone, yet I will stand against the whole world and shall not heed any opposition or hostility.’²⁷

What dedication is captured in his words! This should be the spirit and sense of service to the Khalifa of the time!

Khilafat and Wasiyyat

Even to this day, the khalifa continues to call his people to righteousness. Conscious of the import of the blessings of khilafat, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad reminds the Jama'at that simply having accepted the messiah and khalifa of the age will not be sufficient before God. Acceptance without responsibility is not enough since with acceptance the responsibilities have grown manifold.²⁸ This is precisely in line with the Qur'anic instruction that Muslims must be those who 'believe and do good works.' So the good deeds cannot be separated from the belief itself and only by complying with both aspects can Muslims be worthy of the bounty of khilafat.

It was for this purpose that he reminded the Jama'at of the blessed institution of Wasiyyat – i.e. of leading righteous lives and making exemplary sacrifices, for it is only through this that there is any chance of preserving the degree of righteousness that makes man worthy of Divine favours.

The Promised Messiah^(as) also commented on this and reminded

his Jama'at that it must put in an effort as well as seek Divine favour for it to benefit from anything. Only the foolish farmer prays for a good harvest without working on his land and even after he has worked he does not sit still and simply pray to God. Rather he is ever-vigilant that his work is not gone to waste.²⁹ It is this attitude and responsibility that will secure the future of Khilafat and the final victory of Islam.

Conclusion

Words cannot capture how fortunate we are to live during this blessed era. The institution of khilafat was foretold by God and promised to the God-fearing. It is an institution that has proved its truth time and time again and proved the truth of the Promised Messiah^(as) and the Holy Prophet^(saw). It is an institution that is the **only** hope for the salvation of the world today. Muslims must indeed hold fast to the rope of Khilafat, respond to its every call and pray that its mercy extends for all time to come so that the promise of God is fulfilled and lasting peace established in this world.

KHILAFAT IN ISLAM

In the end, let us remind ourselves of God's words:

Allah has promised to those among you who believe and do good works that He will surely make them Successors in the earth, as He made Successors from among those who were before them; and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them; and that He will surely give them in exchange security and peace after their fear: They will worship Me, and they will not associate anything with Me. Then who so is ungrateful after that, they will be the rebellious. And observe Prayer, and give Zakat and obey the Messenger, that you may be shown mercy. (Ch.24:Vs.56-57)

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2. *The Holy Qur'an*, (Translation by Hadhrat Maulvi Sher Ali^(ra)), Ch.7:Vs.70, 170; Ch.10:V.15.
3. *The Holy Qur'an*, (Translation by Hadhrat Maulvi Sher Ali^(ra)), Ch.2:V.31; Ch.38:V.27.
4. *Sunan-ut-Tirmidhi, Kitabul Ilmi Babu ma Ja'a Fil-Akhdhi Bis Sunnah*. Also *Sunano Abi Dawud, Kitab-us-Sunnati, Babu Luzumis Sunnah*.
5. It is narrated in *Bukhari, Kitabul Ah-Kam Babul Istikhlaf* that Hadhrat Aisha^(ra) said: 'The Holy Prophet said that he had intended to call in Abu Bakr and hand him written testament for his khilafat, so that after the death of the Holy Prophet^(saw), other claimants to the office might not arise, but then the Holy Prophet^(saw) did not pursue the idea believing that God would not accept the election of any other person besides Abu Bakr as Khalifa, nor would the believers agree otherwise.'
6. *Five Volume Commentary on The Holy Qur'an* by Hadhrat Mirza Bahseeruddin Mahmud Ahmad^(ra), note 2360 of verse 56 of Sura Al-Nur. (Also see note 432A on Ch. 3 verse 80).
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- Armstrong, p.22.
10. This relates to a prophecy made by the Prophet^(saw) when, as he migrated from Makkah to Madinah, he was being pursued by Suraqa bin Malik. After his horse repeatedly stumbled, Suraqa gave up the chase and it was then that the Prophet^(saw) said to him, ‘Suraqa, how will you feel with the gold bangles of the king of Iran on your wrists?’. Later on Suraqa accepted Islam and when Iran fell to the Muslims during the Khilafat of Hadhrat Umar^(ra), the Muslims inherited immense wealth including the gold bangles that the king used to wear on State functions. These were worn by Suraqa under the instruction of Hadhrat Umar^(ra) in fulfilment of the Prophet’s^(saw) prophecy.
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 16. Jews at the time were expecting three personalities, a Prophet, a Messiah (Christ) and Elijah. John the Baptist was Elijah and Jesus was the Messiah see John 1:20-21, John 1:41; Matthew 11:14, 17:11-13.
 17. Matthew 5:17-18.
 18. ‘Abdullah bin Umar^(ra) relates that the Holy Prophet^(saw) said. “Surely things will happen to my people as happened earlier to Israelites; they will resemble each other like one shoe in a pair resembles the other to the extent that if anyone among the Israelites has openly committed adultery with his mother there will be some who will do this in my Ummah as well. Verily the Israelites were divided into 72 sections but my people will be divided into 73 sections, all of

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them will be in the fire except one.” The companions asked, “Who are they O Messenger of Allah,” The Holy Prophet^(saw) said, “They are those who will be like me and my Companions.”
(*Tirmidhi, Kitabul Eeman*)

19. It is relevant here to note that as with the Jewish clergy at the time of Jesus, it was prophesied that the Muslim clergy too would oppose the Messiah and Khalifa of the time. Hadhrat Muyuddin Ibn Arabi in his book *Al-Fatuh-haat-i-Makkiyya* Vol.3, Page 336 says ‘At the time of the appearance of Imam Mahdi none would be his open enemy other than the divines – the religious scholars, in particular.
20. *Fatuhati Makkiyya*, Vol. I, p.545 as noted in p.2 of *Khataman Nabiiyyeen* published by the London Mosque, 1982.
21. *The Will* (Al Wassiyat), Published by Islam International Publications 2004, p.7.
22. Ibid p.8-9.
23. Ibid p.9.
24. The Holy Qur’an, Ch.24:V.52
The response of the believers,

when they are called to Allah and His Messenger in order that he may judge between them, is only that they say ‘We hear and we obey.’ And it is they who will prosper.

25. *Nubuwwat & Khilafat: Prophethood & its Successorship*, Islam International Publications Ltd, 2006, p.37.
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KHILAFAT EDITION 1



Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) (1835 – 1908)

‘I came from God as a Manifestation of His Power and I am an incarnation of God’s Power. And after I am gone there will be some other persons who will be the manifestation of the second Power [of God].’

(Al-Wassiyat)

KHILAFAT EDITION 1



Hadhrat Hakim Maulvi Nuruddin Sahib^(ra) (1841 – 1914)

‘It is God Who has appointed me Khalifa, and He knows best.
No one has the power to remove the Khalifa appointed by God.’

(An Exposition of Some Criticisms Against Khilafat Rashida, by Maulana Sheikh Mubarak Ahmad, Published by The London Mosque 1979)

KHILAFAT EDITION 1



Hadhrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad^(ra) (1889 – 1965)

‘I swear by God at Whose command lies my soul and Who is the Master of judgement, disgrace and accreditation that I am the Khalifa appointed by God.’

(An Exposition of Some Criticisms Against Khilafat-i-Rashida, by Maulana Sheikh Mubarak Ahmad, Published by The London Mosque 1979)

KHILAFAT EDITION 1



Hadhrat Hafiz Mirza Nasir Ahmad^(r.w) (1909 – 1982)

‘...Allah, the Glorious, has jealous regard for this station and office (of Khilafat) which he has bestowed on me.’

(Message of Love and Brotherhood to Africa, by Hadhrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad, Islam International Publications (2006) p.32. First Published 1970)

KHILAFAT EDITION 1

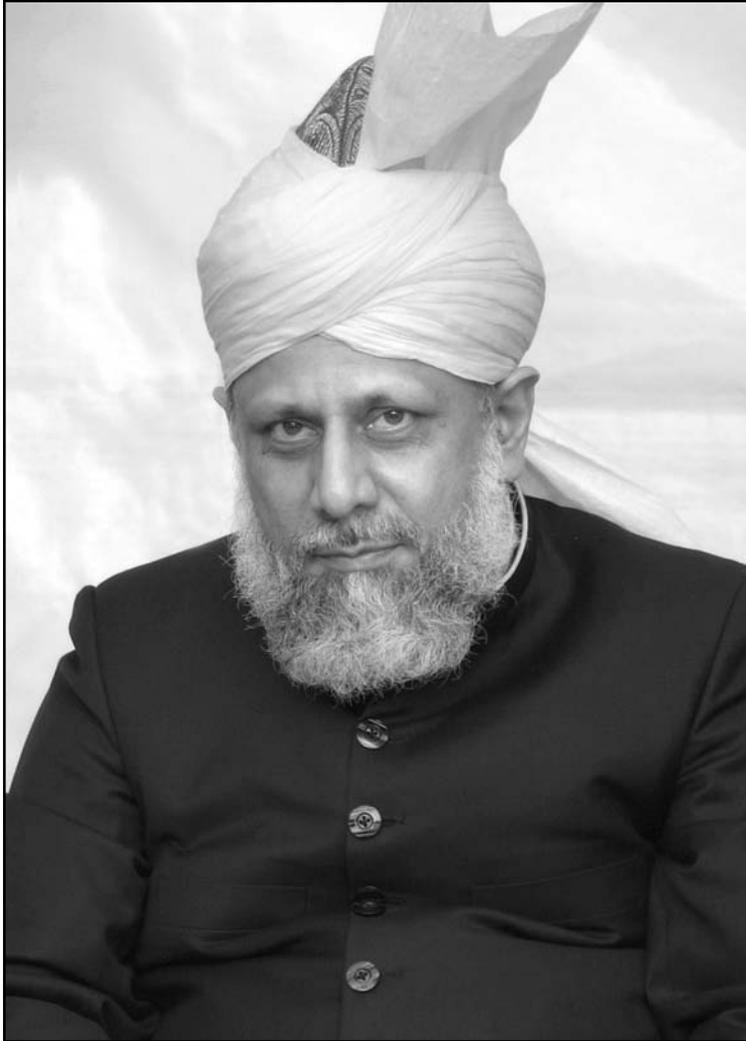


Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(ru) (1928 – 2003)

‘After the break up of the institution of Khilafat in early Islam, it is only the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama‘at in Islam which has been blessed with Khilafat... and the Khalifah plays the same role of head and heart as was played by the Holy Successors of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(saw).’

(With Love to the Muslims of the World, by Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Islam International Publications (2006) p.45)

KHILAFAT EDITION 1



Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (b.1950)

‘Now in this time and age, Khilafat Rashida [Righteous Khilafat] has been established after the passing away of the Promised Messiah...Rejoice! Now you shall always remain under directives that are based on goodness.’

(Conditions of Bait and Responsibilities of an Ahmadi, by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad(aba), Islam International Publications (2006) p.206)

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