

HAZRAT MIRZA BASHIR-UD-DIN MAHMUD AHMAD

Khilafat Keeps Prophethood Alive

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Khalifatul-Masih II

Present English Edition: UK 2019

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Published by:

Islam International Publications Ltd.
Unit 3, Bourne Mill Business Park,
Guildford Road, Farnham, Surrey UK, GU9 9PS
United Kingdom

Printed and bound by:

The following excerpt is taken from a lecture delivered by Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad^{ra} the second khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community on 28 December 1940 on the occasion of the annual convention in Qadian, India. It was part of a wider series of lectures known as Sair-e-Ruhani.

Khilafat Keeps Prophethood Alive

Just as a mosque symbolises the *Khana Ka'bah*, so too does an imam keep alive the memory of prophethood. The early Muslims revived this practice by following Abraham^{as}, that is to say, they established *imamat* (spiritual leadership) among themselves. Hence, when the Holy Prophet^{sa} passed away, his companions established khilafat and kept leadership amongst them alive.

First there was Hazrat Abu Bakr^{ra} and he was then followed by Hazrat Umar^{ra}, Hazrat Uthman^{ra} and Hazrat Ali^{ra} who all occupied the station of Abraham^{as} and thereby became the similitude of a mosque. Just as people elect an imam for themselves within a mosque,

the companions of the Holy Prophet^{sa} chose someone to lead them as their imam after his demise.

I am reminded here of a humorous incident. A friend of mine from Gujrat once told me that when the news of the demise of the Promised Messiah^{as} spread, a maulawi commented that the Ahmadiyya Community is a movement full of English speakers and [thus influenced by western civilisation]; it has nothing at all to do with religion. From here on in, it will be easy to decide whether Mirza Sahib^{as} was a prophet of God or not, for the Holy Prophet^{sa} said that prophethood is always followed by khilafat. And because in his opinion the community was influenced by the west, its leadership would pass on to the Anjuman. This would be sufficient proof that the Promised Messiah^{as} was not in fact a prophet.

The following day a telegram reached Gujrat that Hazrat Maulawi Nur-ud-Din^{ra}

had been chosen as the khalifa and this was readily conveyed to the maulawi in question by the members of the community.

He replied that because Maulawi Nur-ud-Din^{ra} was well versed in religion, he was able to deceive people to [attain this position]. A truer judgement could only be made at the time of his demise.

This maulawi was still alive when Hazrat Khalifatul Masih I^{ra} passed away, and because a disagreement had arisen as to whether the Promised Messiah^{as} should be succeeded by the Anjuman or by khalifat, he felt that this time the community would certainly go astray and claimed that the members of the community would choose the Anjuman to lead them. Not long after, news of my appointment as the khalifa arrived from Qadian. Upon hearing this, the maulawi could only reply that if nothing else Ahmadis were very cunning.

The Holy Prophet^{sa} said that every prophethood is followed by a khilafat in order to convey a resemblance between this institution and a mosque. Mosques are built for the purpose of creating unity in worship, similarly a prophet is tasked with establishing a community for the same purpose. And just as a mosque symbolises the *Khana Ka'bah*, so too does khilafat act as a reminder of the Holy Prophet^{sa} and all this is the result of that commandment of Allah the Exalted wherein He says:

وَاتَّخِذُوا مِن مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى¹

That is: 'Just as A House of God has been built, you too must live your lives in accordance with the practice of Abraham^{as} and keep alive the spirit of his soul.' When worshippers are commanded to take the station of Abraham^{as} as a place of prayer, this does not mean that they

¹ *Surah Al-Baqarah*, 2:126 [Publishers]

ought to stand themselves on the exact spot where he prayed. That would be impossible and if it were the case, the debate over the exact place of Abraham's^{as} prayer would never end. And if, hypothetically speaking, this issue was indeed resolved, the small matter of how all the world's Muslims could pray there would still need to be settled. For example, on the occasion of the Hajj close to 100,000 pilgrims descend on Mecca. Even if each of them was to perform a prayer in the manner of the Hanafis, so that their movements would resemble little more than the pecking of a hen, it would still take at least two minutes to perform their duties. Accordingly, 720 individuals would be able to do their prayers in that particular spot on any given day. And what would the 99,280 other pilgrims do, and what would become of the rest of the Muslim world who would not be able to pray there at all. Therefore, again, if this

commandment is taken literally it cannot be put into practice. On the contrary, it would open up the door to conflict and disorder and indeed this issue has, in the past, already led to a person being killed in Mecca. Accordingly, this verse cannot be taken literally. Instead, as I have already explained, here Allah the Exalted is referring to leadership and directs people to elect an imam so that the practice of Abraham^{as} can be kept alive.

In truth the following verse refers to two types of leadership:

إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا ۗ قَالَ وَمَنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي ۗ قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ
 عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ ۝ وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمْنًا ۗ وَ
 اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى ۗ²

First, God says to Abraham إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا. That is: ‘I am about to raise you as an imam, meaning to say a prophet.’ To this the patriarch

² *Surah Al-Baqarah*, 2:125-126 [Publishers]

replies: **وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي**. That is: ‘Raise prophets from among my progeny too, for if I die, who will carry this mission forward.’ However, God told Abraham^{as} that he was wrong in this and revealed to him that at various times the people of his progeny would be among the most unjust, therefore, He could never entrust them with this mission. Conversely, God would command his progeny to keep his practice alive, and those who would live up to this, would be appointed as imams. Thus, in this verse Allah the Exalted speaks of two types of religious leadership. First, prophethood which is divinely bestowed, and secondly khilafat which involves the agency of other human beings and which is hinted at by the words **وَأَتَّخِذُوا مِنْ مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى**. There is an element of human influence in this and so people are commanded to strive for it.

Through this verse, Allah the Exalted has instructed human beings that when prophet-

hood is not present as a religious leadership, khilafat ought to be established. Again, if these words are taken literally they can never be implemented.

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