

A Hadith report about the “eternal *khilafat*”

Misrepresented by the Qadiani Jama'at

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A Hadith report frequently quoted by the Qadiani *Jama'at* runs as follows:

“The Messenger of Allah said: ‘Prophethood shall remain among you as long as Allah wills that it should. Then He will remove it. Then there will be *Khilafat* on the precepts of prophethood which will remain as long as Allah wills that it should. Then He will remove it. Then there will be kingship which will remain as long as Allah wills that it should. Then He will remove it. Then there will be tyranny which will remain as long as Allah wills that it should. Then He will remove it. Then there will be *Khilafat* on the precepts of Prophethood.’ Then he (i.e., the Holy Prophet) became silent.”¹

They explain it as meaning that, first, the “righteous *Khilafat*” of the first four *Khalifas* of the Holy Prophet Muhammad was established after him. It came to an end and was followed by kingship and then tyranny of Muslim rulers. This was then to be followed by the *Khilafat* of the Qadiani *Jama'at*, which would continue forever, since the Holy Prophet “became silent” and said nothing further.

It is claimed by them that, since the first phase of *Khilafat* “on the precepts of prophethood” (i.e., a true successorship to the prophethood of the Holy Prophet Muhammad) was established after a Prophet, it means that its second phase would also be established after a prophet. They claim that this second phase is their *Khilafat* in the Qadiani *Jama'at*, established after the “prophet” Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian.²

Our comments

This hadith begins by saying that prophethood will come to an end, and then the *Khilafat* will be established after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. To any reasonable person, this is a clear statement that prophethood terminated with the Holy Prophet Muhammad and therefore no prophet shall come after him. Moreover, there is no mention whatsoever in this hadith of a subsequent prophethood coming in order to re-establish *Khilafat* “on the precepts of prophethood”. It is simply an assertion by the

¹ *Mishkāt al-Maṣābiḥ*, book 15: *Riqāq*, last hadith. In the Urdu translation of *Mishkāt* by Maulana Abdul Hakim Khan Akhtar, see vol. 2, p. 539. See also *Musnad Ahmad*, hadith 18406.

² Although this explanation is found commonly in their literature, we refer in particular to the answer given to a question by their fourth *Khalifa* Mirza Tahir Ahmad in March 1988. See the link: <https://www.alislam.org/question-answer/khilafat-on-the-precept-of-prophethood/>

Qadiani *Jama'at* that because true *Khilafat* is mentioned as starting a second time it means that it will be established by another prophet.

The meaning of this hadith is made clear by what a narrator added after the above point up to which the Qadiani *Jama'at* quotes it. This addition is as follows in the report in *Mishkat* (and it is similar in the version in *Musnad Ahmad*):

قَالَ حَبِيبٌ فَلَمَّا قَامَ عُمَرُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الْعَزِيزِ كَتَبْتُ إِلَيْهِ بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَذْكُرُهُ أَيَّاهُ وَقُلْتُ أَرْجُوا أَنْ تَكُونُ أَمِيرَ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ بَعْدَ الْمَلِكِ الْعَاصِ وَالْجَبْرِيتِ فَسَرَّ بِهِ وَأَعْجَبَهُ يَعْنِي عُمَرَ بْنَ عَبْدِ الْعَزِيزِ-

“Habib said: When Umar ibn Abdul Aziz came (i.e., became *Khalifa*), I wrote to him with this hadith to remind him of it, and I said: ‘I hope you are the Chief of the Believers (*Amīr-ul-Mu’minīn*) after the kings and the tyrants.’ He, Umar ibn Abdul Aziz, was pleased by this and was much delighted.”

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz was a just and righteous ruler and *Khalifa*, in the mould of the first four *Khalifas* of Islam, and ruled at exactly the turn of the first century *Hijrah*. He is widely regarded as the first *Mujaddid* to arise in accordance with the hadith about the coming of *mujaddids* in every century. Therefore this second phase of *Khilafat*, after the period of kings and tyrants, is the institution of *mujaddids*, and Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad himself was a *Khalifa* of the Holy Prophet Muhammad and *Mujaddid*.

In his book *Shahadat-ul-Quran*, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has explained in detail that *Khilafat* to the Holy Prophet Muhammad did not terminate with the first four *Khalifas*, but that it continued through *mujaddids* and other Divinely-inspired saints, and Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad himself was a part of that continuing *Khilafat*. Referring to the likeness between Moses and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, he writes:

“For fourteen hundred years, Moses was granted servants of the law who were messengers of God and His inspired ones; and this series ended with a messenger (i.e., Jesus) who invited to the truth, not with the sword, but merely by mercy and good morals. Therefore, so it was that our Holy Prophet was also granted servants of the Shariah who, in accordance with the hadith ‘The learned ones among my followers are like the prophets of the Israelites’, were recipients of revelation (*mulham*) and Divinely-inspired saints (*muhaddath*). And just as in the last era of the Mosaic law was sent Jesus who, not with the sword, but with good morals and mercy invited to the truth, likewise for this Shariah (i.e., Islam) God sent the Promised Messiah so that he too should invite to the right path only by good morals, mercy and heavenly lights.”³

³ *Shahādat-ul-Qur’ān*, see *Rūhānī Khazā’in*, vol. 6, p. 323.

He refers to *mujaddids* as spiritual *khalifas* of the Holy Prophet:

“...after the passage of a period of time, the dust of corrupted notions settles upon the holy teachings (i.e., of Islam), and the face of the pure truth is hidden, then to show that beautiful face there come *mujaddids*, Divinely inspired saints (*muhaddath*) and spiritual *khalifas*.”⁴

“...*mujaddids* and spiritual *khalifas* are needed by the Muslim people in the same way as were the prophets required from ancient times.”⁵

“And to say that it is not obligatory to believe in the *mujaddids* is to deviate from the command of God because He says: “And whoever disbelieves after this, they are the transgressors” (24:55), i.e., after the sending of the *khalifas*, whoever remains a denier of them, he is among the transgressors.”⁶

In the last extract above, he is quoting from the end of the *khilafat* verse of the Quran. This verse is constantly being repeated by the Qadiani *Jama'at* in support of the establishment of their *khilafat* system. But Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad clearly identifies the *khilafat* promised to Muslims in that verse with the coming of *mujaddids*, he himself being one of them.

The Qadiani *Jama'at* believes that after the Righteous *Khilafat* of 30 years, there was no more *Khilafat* till the establishment of their own *Khilafat* after the Promised Messiah's death in 1908. As opposed to this, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad writes:

“Given that God had explained by use of an analogy that He would raise *khalifas* among the Muslim people in the same manner as He raised successors after Moses, one should see what course did God follow after the death of Moses: did He send successors for only thirty years, or did He extend this series for fourteen hundred years? ... how could it be that the series of successors of Moses should be continued for fourteen hundred years, but here the *khilafat* terminate after a mere thirty years? ... And this spiritual life and inner vision which has the capability to invite people of other faiths towards the truth — this is just the thing which in other words is known as *khilafat*. How can you then assert that the *khilafat*, after having continued for only thirty years, vanished into nothing?”⁷

According to the Qadiani *Jama'at*, that *khilafat* did indeed vanish after 30 years, leaving the next more than 1200 years vacant.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 340.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 340.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 354–355.

We may also point out that the Qadiani *Jama'at* has been quoting extracts from this book *Shahadat-ul-Quran* as if Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is referring in to a *khilafat* to be established after him as a prophet. In an article on their website, entitled *Khilafat and Morality*,⁸ it is stated:

“According to Prophet Muhammad, after the advent of the Promised Messiah, God would establish a system of *Khilafat*.”

It then quotes the hadith which we are discussing (“Prophethood shall remain among you as long as Allah wills”) and says: “Regarding this prophecy, the Promised Messiah explains”. The following extract is then quoted from *Shahadat-ul-Quran*:

“A *Khalifa* is a reflection of a Prophet. As man is mortal, God Almighty designed that Prophets, who are more exalted and honored than all other beings, should be reflectively preserved forever. For this purpose, God instituted *Khilafat* so that the world should at no time be deprived of the blessings of Prophethood.”⁹

However, the Promised Messiah has **not at all** mentioned this hadith there and is not writing in explanation of it. As to the above extract itself, it is most certainly **not** about the Promised Messiah being a prophet and a system of *khilafat* being established after him. The “prophet” and “prophethood” mentioned relate to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, and the *khalifa* and *khilafat* relate to the coming of *mujaddids* and Divinely-inspired saints (known as *muhaddath*) after him. Only two pages later, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad writes:

“Prophets certainly cannot arise in this *Ummah* (i.e., among Muslims), but if *khalifas* of the Holy Prophet do not come either, showing the marvels of spiritual life from time to time, then the spirituality of Islam comes to an end.”¹⁰

Earlier in the same book he wrote:

“As our Master and Messenger, may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him, is the *Khatam al-anbiya*, and after him there no prophet can come, for this reason saints (singular: *muhaddath*) have been substituted for prophets in this *Shariah* (i.e., Islam).”¹¹

Thus, according to Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the only *khilafat* in Islam is the *khilafat* established after the Holy Prophet Muhammad, who was the last Prophet, and the Promised Messiah is himself a *khalifa* within that *khilafat*, and is a *muhaddath*.

⁸ <https://www.alislam.org/articles/khilafat-morality/>

⁹ *Shahadat-ul-Qur'an*, see *Ruhani Khazain*, vol. 6, p. 353

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 355.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 323–324.

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