

## 34. The Home Conference

Three years after the commencement of his prophethood the Holy Prophet declared that 'Ali is his brother his executor and successor. This was in accordance with the logical and natural course. The Prophet needed a strong and truly helpful minister to support him and to aid him in spreading the message and building the State which is expected to be built on the foundation of the principles of the Heavenly Message. This was not unprecedented in the history of prophethood. Moses asked his Lord to support him with a minister from the members of his family Aaron his brother.

A minister who is strong enough to face the dangers which the Holy Prophet was expected to face ought to become his deputy and caliph who replaces him when anything happens to him. By this the Holy Prophet would have taken whatever he could take of precaution in order to secure the continuity of the Message and its defusion when he departs from this world instead of leaving its future to chances.

The reader may recall that we have discussed in the fifth chapter (vol. 1) what the Messenger did when his Lord commanded him after three years from the commencement of the Message to warn his closest relatives when the following verses were revealed:

***"And warn thy nearest kinsmen. And lower thy wing to the believers who follow thee. Then if they disobey thee say: I am free (of responsibility) for what ye do..." The Holy Qur'an chapter 26 verses 214-216.***

The Holy Prophet at that time invited the children of Abdul-Muttalib who were the closest of his kinsmen. They were at that time thirty or forty men. He invited them for a banquet which contained a small amount of food and milk. They ate and drank from the little food and milk until they were satisfied. When the opportunity came the Holy Prophet spoke to them saying (and the Imam 'Ali reported it):

"O children of Abdul-Muttalib by God I know of no young man from among the Arabs ever brought his people better than I brought to you. I have brought to you the best for you in this world and in the Hereafter. Certainly God has commanded me to invite you to it. Who is among you that will be my minister in this mission and he will become my brother my executor and my successor among you?"

The audience kept silent. 'Ali said "Prophet of God I will be your minister in this mission." He held my neck and said: "This is my brother my executor and my successor among you. Listen to him and obey him." The group laughed saying to Abu Talib: "He commanded you to listen to your son and to obey him!".

Al-Tabari recorded this hadith in his history (part 2 page 216) Ibn Al-Athir in his history Al-Kamil (part 2 page 41) recorded this hadith and so did Abu Al-Fida in his history (part 1 page 116) Al-Khazin Ala-o-Deen Al-Baghdadi in his commentary on the Holy Qur'an (page 390) and Al-Suyuti in his book Jami-Al-Jawami-a (part 7 page 392) where he mentioned it in reliance on Al-Tabari. In the same part (page 397) he reported that all the six reliable recorders of the hadith (Ibn Is-Haq Ibn Jareer Ibn Abu Hashim Ibn Mardawaih Abu Na-eem and Al-Baihaqi) reported this hadith in their books. Ibn Abu Al-Hadid in his commentary on Nahiul-Balagha (volume 3 page 254) also recorded this hadith and Muhammad Hussein Haikal also recorded it in his book Hayaat Muhammad first edition (page 104). [1](#)

I have already discussed in the fifth chapter the significance of this declaration. What I want to mention now is that this declaration indicates that the Messenger was looking through the light of God at the future which was stored for the blessed Message of Islam of diffusion throughout the world.

He was also expecting the birth of a state built on its principles and that the carrier of this message who would be the leader of a nation will need a deputy that represents him and succeeds him and that that deputy ought to be obeyed as the man of Message ought to be obeyed. Therefore he said to the group: "Listen to him and obey him." Thus the deputy has an authority similar to the authority of his leader.

Some scholars say that this hadith indicates only that 'Ali is the successor of the Holy Prophet among the children of Abdul-Muttalib. It does not indicate that he is the successor of the Prophet for all the Muslims.

This argument is unsound. The caliphate cannot be partitioned so the Messenger would have two caliphs: One for the Hashimites and one for the rest of the Muslims. The caliph has to be for all the Muslims because the Messenger is the head of all the Muslims and so is his caliph.

The Muslims in regard to the caliphate are two factions: One says that the Messenger did not appoint a successor; the other says that he appointed 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib. There is no third faction that says that the Messenger appointed a caliph for the Hashimites and left the rest of the Muslims without a caliph.

The Holy Prophet would not make a clannish discrimination by appointing a caliph for his clan and leaving the rest of the Muslims without leadership. The Prophet by the nature of his message is supposed to be more concerned with the future of his nation than with the future of his clan. Therefore it would be inconceivable that he appoints for his clan a religious authority that represents him and replaces him then leaves the millions of his followers without authority and leadership.

Before I end my deliberation about this declaration I would like to dwell a little while upon the significance

of the contents of this declaration.

The Final of the Prophets of God "brothered" a child of thirteen years and appointed him a "caliph" (successor) of his after that child gave the Prophet a promise that he will be his minister in his important mission.

Let us first ask: What is the value of a promise of a child at this age to assist in such a tremendous mission which is concerned with the future of Islam and fraught with great consequences of this kind?

Suppose a child of this age promises to assist you in realizing a considerably important project for the future.

How can you rely on his promise? And what is the value of a promise of such a child whose opinion may change and his attitude could be reversed within days or hours?

Again how could the Holy Prophet know the righteousness of 'Ali and his capability of leadership in his future life while he is still thirteen years old? The life of a child who seems to be good and righteous could change during his youth and manhood and his nature could become corrupt.

It is also possible for a child who seems to be corrupt to change and become one of the best people during the days of his manhood. It is impossible for any human to know with certainty the future of a child. The knowledge of this belongs only to God who knows the future of everything.

The Holy Prophet's acceptance of 'Ali's promised assistance in making the mission a success and the Prophet's taking that promise with such a high consideration shows that the Prophet had foreseen the bright future of 'Ali with utmost certainty.

Giving that child the high ranks of brotherhood executorship and successorship implies a clear prophecy concerning 'Ali and his future superiority in knowledge righteousness bravery and wisdom. It was impossible for the Messenger as a human being to foresee the future. He only saw that future through a revelation from God.

The high ranks which were bestowed upon him were only by the order of God and as a reward from God to 'Ali for his promise of assistance which the Almighty knew that it will be implemented with unparalleled sincerity.

All that indicates that 'Ali while he was in his childhood was above the rest of men and his brilliant future made him the candidate whom the Almighty chose to succeed His Messenger.

The authenticity of this hadith and the magnanimity of its content is supported by its accordance with the Hadith of the Analogy of 'Ali to Aaron which we shall deal with in the following pages and which is considered of the most authentic hadiths in the eyes of the Muslim scholars.

1. I relied in recording the above sources on Sheikh Al-Amini in his book Al-Ghadir part 2 pp. 279-280.

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