

3. Finality of prophethood

The next innovation which is sought to be introduced into the Ahmadiyya movement after the death of its founder is the doctrine of his prophethood. The first question that is to be solved in this connection is whether or not prophethood was brought to a close in the person of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. If Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, was the last of the prophets, then no prophet can appear after him; and if prophets must continue to appear among his followers as they rose before his advent, then the whole Muslim world has unanimously adhered to a false belief for the last thirteen hundred years. It is a question, therefore, of the utmost importance and requires the serious attention of every true Muslim. The question of the finality of prophethood is a question of principle, while the question of the prophethood of the Promised Messiah is only an off-shoot of this wider question. If prophethood was brought to a close in the person of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, as has been the unanimous belief of the whole Muslim world, then the Promised Messiah cannot be a prophet, otherwise he, and not the founder of Islam, would be the last of the prophets, and if the door is still open, not only the Promised Messiah but a thousand other prophets may arise, and united Islam be divided into a thousand camps each with its own prophet at its head, and the illustrious founder of Islam quite thrown into oblivion in this anarchy.

M. Mahmud's views on continuity of prophethood.

Before dealing with the question of the finality of prophethood, it is necessary to show that M. Mahmud openly holds the doctrine that *thousands of prophets* shall appear after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Speaking of believers in the doctrine of

finality of prophethood, he says in his *Anwār-i-Khilāfat*:

“Likewise they say that however much a person may advance in virtue and goodness, nay even surpass many prophets in righteousness and piety, may attain the utmost knowledge of God, but God will never make him a prophet, never raise him to that dignity. Their thinking thus is due to not assigning to Allah the attributes due to Him; otherwise to say nothing of one prophet, I say there shall be thousands of prophets, and a person who rises to the dignity of prophets like John can become a prophet. They question the prophethood of the Promised Messiah, on whom be peace, but I say, *even now* there can be a prophet.” (p. 62)

“But if a sword is placed on both sides of my neck and I am told to confess that no prophet shall come after the Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, I will say to him, you are a liar, a very great liar; prophets can appear after him, they will certainly appear.” (p. 65)

Similarly, in his earlier work, *Haqīqat-un-nubuwwat*, M. Mahmud writes:

“This is love (for the Prophet) which compels me to show the falsity, so far as it is in my power, of the doctrine of the finality of prophethood.... To say that the appearance of prophets after the Holy Prophet is entirely shut off means that the Holy Prophet deprived the world of the grace of prophethood, and that after his appearance God shut off this favour. Now consider whether according to this doctrine the Holy Prophet appears to be a mercy for the worlds or the opposite of it — we seek refuge in Allah from this. If this doctrine is admitted, it would mean that he came as a sort of curse to the world and anyone who thinks so is accursed and rejected (of God).” (pp. 186, 187)

It is clear from these quotations that M. Mahmud entirely rejects the doctrine of the finality of prophethood and denounces all those who hold the Holy Prophet Muhammad to be the last of the prophets as *la'natī* and *mardūd* (accursed and rejected). Therefore it is necessary to devote serious attention to this question, and we will first see what is the teaching of the Holy Quran on this point.

Finality of prophethood according to the teachings of Islam

The Quran on finality of prophethood.

From the Quran it appears that all the prophets raised before the Holy Prophet were sent to particular nations and their message was, therefore, only for the people for whose regeneration they were raised. In no case was the message of a prophet meant for the whole world, and it was also therefore not meant to abide for ever in the world. The needs of different people in the infancy of mankind required particular directions for their use and it was never meant that all those directions should ever continue to guide humanity. Hence also it was that every prophet's book suffered more or less corruption. But with the advent of our Holy Prophet, we observe a great change brought about in the work of prophethood. The day of the national prophets was over, and with the advent of Muhammad had dawned the era of the world-prophet. He was commanded to make the proclamation:

“O people! I am an apostle of God to you all.” (7:158)

His message was for the whole world, i.e., for all countries and all ages. He was the prophet of the Arabs and the non-Arabs, the prophet of his own time and the prophet of the future. His message was therefore neither limited by considerations of place nor by those of time. He was to be the *one* prophet of the world, *the Prophet* indeed. And the great purpose to be served was the unity of the whole human race. National prejudices were to be for ever swept off, and hence was laid the basis of a brotherhood

which had *humanity* for its watch-word. The message given was of such a comprehensive nature that it could satisfy the needs of all nations and all ages, and therefore no need was left for a new message. And if there was to be no new message, neither could there be a new messenger. The previous books had suffered corruption and therefore also new messages were needed in spite of them, but the Holy Quran was not to suffer corruption. Hence the Quran was *the one Message* for all nations and all ages, and Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, *the one Messenger* of the whole world to the day of judgment.

All that has been stated above is clearly stated in the Holy Quran. A study of all the sacred books of the world leads us to the conclusion that no book claims to have been revealed for the guidance of the whole human race except the Holy Quran. Another equally important conclusion to which a perusal of the sacred history leads us is that, besides the Quran, no sacred book claims to have been made perfect or to have perfected the religious requirements of the world. But both these distinctions are claimed by the Holy Quran in the plainest words. It says: "Say, O people, I am an Apostle of God to you *all*;" and it says:

"This day have I made perfect your religion for you and made complete My favour to you." (5:3)

Jesus Christ is the last of the national prophets, and we find him plainly stating not only that he had not been sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but also that he had many things to say which his followers could not bear but that when the Paraclete came he should teach them all truth. The fact is then undeniable that truth had been revealed to different nations through their prophets partially, and it was revealed in its perfection only at the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Hence when truth was completely revealed, no prophet was needed to reveal any further truth.

What follows logically from the various statements made in the Holy Quran regarding the distinctive characteristics of the Holy Prophet is also stated clearly when the Holy Prophet is called *Khātam-un-Nabiyyin* or the seal, or the last, of the

prophets. The word *Khātām* means both a *seal* and the *end* (see Lane's Lexicon). As the object of the Quran was to state not only that prophethood was brought to a close but also that it was brought to perfection, therefore it has adopted a word which carries the combined significance. In fact, it is clear that the very perfection of prophethood in the holy person of our Prophet marks him out to be the last of prophets and bars the way to the raising of further prophets, just as the perfection of Law in the Holy Quran renders it the last Book and bars the way to the revelation of further books. Law was brought to perfection in the Holy Quran, and prophethood was brought to perfection in Muhammad, and therefore as the Quran became the last of the revealed books, Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, became the last of the prophets of the world.

M. Mahmud's argument which contradicts these plain words of the Holy Quran is fallacious. He says that if the door to prophethood was barred by the advent of the Holy Prophet, he was a curse to the world, not a mercy. If there is any truth in this argument, then M. Mahmud must believe that the Quran came as "a curse" for the world, for it bars the way to the revelation of further books. He accepts the Quran to be the last of the Books, without entertaining the idea that by barring the way to further revelation of books it becomes a curse to humanity, yet he dares utter the words that if Muhammad is accepted to be the last of the prophets, he becomes a curse to the world by barring the way to prophethood. And yet how clear it is that prophets were needed to bring guidance to the world, so that when guidance was made perfect, no need was left for the appearance of a prophet. What was required has been given to us by the Holy Prophet and the Holy Quran, and hence we neither stand in need of another prophet, nor in need of another book. The whole truth has been revealed, and it has been preserved from corruption, and therefore following that truth and the example of the Holy Prophet, we can hold our communion with the Divine Being and walk in the ways of righteousness.

Hadith on finality of prophethood.

Sayings of the Holy Prophet are even clearer and the Holy Prophet plainly spoke of himself as being the last of the prophets. The following report is accepted by both *Bukhari* and *Muslim* and is therefore of the greatest authenticity:

“Sa‘d, son of Abi Waqqas, reported that the Apostle of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, said to Ali: You stand to me in the same relation as Aaron stood to Moses except that there is no prophet after me.”¹⁰

These words of the Holy Prophet himself should be sufficient to settle the whole question. It is the duty of a Muslim to bow his head without the least hesitation before the judgment of the Holy Prophet. Here are his very words, recorded in the most reliable works. He tells Ali that he cannot be a prophet because there is no prophet after him. If, as M. Mahmud says, there were to be thousands of prophets after the Holy Prophet, why did he speak those words to Ali? We are sometimes told that the Holy Prophet only negated the appearance of a prophet with a book after him, but this saying shows clearly that he negated even the appearance of a prophet without a book. In fact, it is simply illogical to speak of a prophet without a book. What would be a messenger without a message? Anyhow, the saying negatives absolute prophethood for, if the appearance of a prophet were possible, Ali should have been such a prophet. But as Ali was not a prophet, it is clear that no prophet can appear after the Holy Prophet.

Another saying of equally high credibility runs thus:

“And surely there shall be among my followers thirty liars, everyone of them asserting that he is a prophet and I am *Khātam-un-Nabiyyin* (the seal of the prophets), there is no prophet after me.”¹¹

According to this saying, anyone laying claim to prophethood after the Holy Prophet must be a liar. Here the phrase *Khātam-un-Nabiyyin* is also explained as meaning, *there is no prophet after me*, i.e., he is the last of the prophets of the world.

Another saying of very great authenticity is recorded in the *Bukhari*:

“My likeness and the likeness of the prophets before me is the likeness of a person who built a house and he made it beautiful and made it complete except the place of a brick of the corner. So people began to go round about it and to wonder at him and to say: Why have you not placed this brick? He (i.e., the Prophet) said, So I am that brick and I am the seal of the prophets.”¹²

This saying also explains the meaning of the word *Khātam-un-Nabiyyin*, for it likens the raising of prophets to the building of a house and compares the Holy Prophet to the corner-stone of that house, so that the house was almost complete before his appearance, and there was no place but that of the corner-stone. If thousands of prophets had yet to appear, as M. Mahmud teaches, the Holy Prophet ought to have told us that thousands of bricks were yet wanting to complete that house. But there is no room here for any prophet after the corner-stone has been placed, unless that corner-stone, or some other brick already there, is first taken out and thrown off.

Now these reports of the highest authority give us three of the most clear sayings of the Holy Prophet, proving beyond the shadow of a doubt that the Holy Prophet looked upon himself as the last of the prophets. Such clear testimony of such high authority can be obtained on very few points, but where it may be obtainable, a Muslim can have no choice but to bow before it and give up his individual opinion if it is opposed to the word of the Prophet. Many other reports corroborating this testimony could be cited but I wish to be as brief in this discussion as possible. I may, however, quote one more report, according to which the Holy Prophet said:

“Had there been a prophet after me, ‘Umar would have been (one).”¹³

According to another report still, the Holy Prophet said that he had six characteristics distinguishing him from other prophets,

one of which was that he was the last of the prophets.¹⁴

Some arguments against finality refuted.

All these reports have been handed down to us by the companions of the Holy Prophet, and hence it is clear that the companions all accepted the finality of the prophethood of the Holy Prophet. There is not a single companion who can be shown to have entertained a belief against this; nor is there a single report, however weak or unreliable it might be, stating that prophets would continue to appear after the Holy Prophet. Some of M. Mahmud's supporters cite the 35th verse of the seventh chapter of the Holy Quran in support of the contention that prophets must continue to appear after the Holy Prophet, but their choice of this verse is quite out of place. The verse runs thus:

“O children of Adam! if there come to you apostles from among you relating to you My communications, then whoever shall guard against evil and act aright — they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve.” (7:35)

Here it would be seen that after Adam's trial, the children of Adam are addressed, and there is no doubt that apostles came to the children of Adam, and every nation and every country and every age had a prophet, but then this chain of prophets was, according to the Holy Quran, brought to a termination by raising a prophet for all ages. So this verse in no way shows that prophets shall continue to appear after the Holy Prophet.

Secondly, if this verse promises the continuance of the raising of prophets to the children of Adam, there is another which in similar words promises the continuance of the coming of guidance. It runs thus:

“So surely there will come to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.” (2:38)

Here too the children of Adam are accosted after Adam's trial, and the similarity of the words of the two verses shows that with the coming of apostles the coming of guidance is also promised,

and if the one must continue, the other cannot cease. But strangely enough, M. Mahmud holds that guidance would not come after the Holy Prophet Muhammad, because it was revealed in perfection in the Holy Quran. But I ask, if guidance has ceased to come solely because it was made perfect in the Quran, does not the same reason apply to the discontinuance of the coming of apostles? Prophethood, it is admitted by him, was made perfect in the person of Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, and if perfection of guidance is a bar to the coming of fresh guidance, perfection of prophethood is a bar to the coming of fresh prophets.

Thirdly, it must be borne in mind in the same connection that the verse speaking of the coming of apostles includes all kinds of apostles, if there are indeed more kinds than one, therefore it is quite illogical, on the part of those who have started the theory of the continuance of the coming of apostles, to say that such apostles shall come as bring no fresh law. The words of the verse do not allow any such limitation to be placed on it. If prophets must continue to appear under this verse, they must also possess new laws.

I have already said that the companions of the Holy Prophet all unanimously accepted the finality of the prophethood of their master, as a large number of reports shows, while there is not a single report stating that prophets shall continue to appear after the Holy Prophet, nor is there a single companion who should have been known to have entertained such a belief. I do not here mention the name of the companion who speaks of the Messiah, who would appear among the Muslims, as a "prophet of God", according to one version of a single report, for that report can have no bearing upon the principle of the coming of prophets. The report of Nawas bin Sam'an relates a prophecy, the significance of which shall be dealt with elsewhere; it does not interfere with the finality of the prophethood which is a principle enunciated in the clearest words in the Holy Quran as well as the sayings of the Holy Prophet. When a principle is once established, a solitary incident or a prophecy must be interpreted subject to the principle: it cannot violate the principle. Nor do I

think there is any need of discussing the words attributed to ‘Aisha, for which we have not the least evidence as to who the narrators of those words are, and therefore there is not the least evidence that ‘Aisha spoke those words. But even if she did, they do not in any way cast a doubt upon the doctrine of the finality of prophethood. The words, as recorded in the dictionary of Hadith reports known as the *Majma‘-ul-Bihār*, without giving the chain of narrators through whom those words were received, are as follows:

“Say: the seal of prophets (*Khatām-un-nabiyyin*), and do not say, there is no prophet after him.”

The words apparently mean only this, that the phrase *seal of prophets* is a more comprehensive one than the statement, *there is no prophet after him*. I have already shown this in the beginning in explaining the word *khātām* which is the word used in the Holy Quran. *Seal of prophets*, or rather its Arabic original *Khātām-un-Nabiyyin*, conveys a double conception, the conception of perfection and the conception of finality. Therefore that intelligent lady, if she spoke those words, meant nothing more than this that, in stating a doctrine of the faith, the more comprehensive words of the Holy Quran must be preferred to the explanatory words of the report which necessarily referred to only one aspect, i.e., the finality of prophethood. If any other meaning is sought to be given to these words which is opposed to the clear words of a large number of the sayings of the Holy Prophet, the attempt is doomed to failure because it is opposed to the primary rules of interpretation.

Thus I have shown that the doctrine of the finality of prophethood is based on the clearest and strongest testimony, derived from the Holy Quran and the sayings of the Holy Prophet. I have also shown that the companions of the Holy Prophet held the same belief, and I may now add that every Muslim, to whatever sect he may belong, has during the last thirteen hundred years held the belief that prophethood was brought to a termination in the person of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

Use of word *nabī* for non-prophets

Metaphorical use of words prophet (*nabī*), apostle (*rasūl*).

As would appear from what I have stated above, a prophet in the strict terminology of the Islamic law is one to whom the Divine will is revealed, being the guidance which he brings to men. It is for this reason that, guidance being made complete by the Holy Prophet, no new prophet is now needed for the world, and Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, thus remains *the Prophet*, the prophet of all ages as he is the prophet of all nations. In fact, that question may be decided on the simple consideration whether or not the Holy Prophet is the prophet of all ages as he is the prophet of all nations? If he is, then as no prophet could appear in a nation after the Holy Prophet was raised for the regeneration of mankind, so no prophet can appear after him, for if one did, he and not the Prophet Muhammad would be the prophet of the age in which he appeared, and thus Muhammad's prophethood would not be for all ages.

But though the office of the prophet is not any more needed, the gift of prophecy has not been withheld from the followers of the Holy Prophet. The distinction must be clearly understood. The prophet was actually needed to make known to men the Divine will which was revealed to him. The making of prophecies simply has never been held to be the business of a prophet in the strict terminology of the Muslim law. Prophecy is really a kind of miracle, and the office of the prophet is not to show miracles but to make known guidance to men. The miracles are granted to a prophet as corroborative testimony of his truth, so that when he is seen as displaying power or knowledge which is not granted to the ordinary man, he may be recognised as one who holds communion with the Divine Being. Prophecy is a miracle in this sense, and prophecy is simply needed to show that the man holds communion with God, while the object of God in raising a prophet is simply this that he may point out truth to men and make known to them the Divine will. Hence the gift of prophecy is granted even to non-prophets, and the Holy Quran

not only mentions several instances of this among the followers of the former prophets but also promises in clear words that this gift shall be granted to the followers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

Revelation granted to non-prophets.

Among the formers, revelation, we are told, was granted to the mother of Moses, and this is related in clear words:

“And We revealed to Moses’ mother, saying, Give him suck, then when you fear for him, cast him into the river, and do not fear, nor grieve; surely We will bring him back to you and make him one of the apostles.” (28:7)

And so strong was the conviction of Moses’ mother that this was the word of God that she actually cast him into the river, and the Divine promise was fulfilled. The mother of Jesus is also spoken of as having received a revelation:

“And when the angels said, O Mary! Surely Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the world. O Mary! keep to obedience to your Lord and humble yourself and bow down with those who bow down.... When the angels said, O Mary! Surely Allah gives you good news with a word from Him of one whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, worthy of regard in this world and the hereafter, and of those who are made near to Allah.” (3:41–44)

This revelation is a very long one and is continued further on, and it is full of prophecies of great importance. These two instances will suffice to show that the gift of prophecy was granted to non-prophets even among the Israelites, for both Moses’ mother and Mary the mother of Jesus were admittedly not prophets in the strict sense of the word.

Revelation continues among Muslims.

Similarly, the gift of prophecy is promised to the righteous among the followers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, although they do not become *prophets* by receiving that gift. Thus the

Holy Quran speaks of the truly faithful:

“They shall have good news in this world’s life and in the hereafter.” (10:64)

And again:

“As for those who say, Our Lord is Allah, then continue in the right way, the angels descend upon them, saying, Fear not, nor be grieved, and receive good news of the garden which you were promised. We are your guardians in this world’s life and in the hereafter.” (41:30, 31)

And more plainly still:

“These are they into whose hearts He has impressed faith and whom He has strengthened with an inspiration from Him.” (58:22)

All these verses plainly speak of inspiration being granted to the faithful, of angels descending upon them and giving them comfort, of good news relating to the future being given to them.

The sayings of the Holy Prophet may also be quoted as showing that the gift of prophecy is promised to the faithful among his followers. I take the following from the *Bukhari*, the authority of which is incontestable:

“The Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, said: Surely there were among those before you, among the Israelites, men who were spoken to (by God) though they were not prophets, and if there is one among my followers, it is ‘Umar.”¹⁵

Here, then, we are plainly told that every man who is spoken to by God is not necessarily a prophet. On the other hand, promise is given in plain words that among the followers of the Holy Prophet there shall be men who shall be spoken to by God though they shall not be prophets. And why is ‘Umar particularly mentioned? Because there is another saying of the Holy Prophet which I have already quoted: “Had there been a prophet after me, ‘Umar would have been one.” The two sayings read together

make it clear that ‘Umar had the gift of prophecy though he was not a prophet.

Another very reliable report, also recorded in the *Bukhari*, promises the continuance of the gift of prophecy in even clearer words. The Holy Prophet said:

“There remains nothing of prophethood except *mubashshirāt*.”

Asked what is meant by *mubashshirāt*, he said:

“The good visions.”¹⁶

Other reports are recorded, in one of which it is stated that the Holy Prophet said:

“The vision of a true believer is one-forty-sixth part of prophethood.”¹⁷

Now these reports show clearly that the part of prophethood which is called *mubashshirāt*, and which really means *prophecies of the future*, shall be granted to the true believers.

Use of word *prophet* for non-prophets.

Thus both the Holy Quran and the sayings of the Holy Prophet are unanimous in declaring that while, after the Holy Prophet, no one shall be raised to the office of prophethood, there shall be men among the Muslims who shall be spoken to by God and receive the gift of prophecy. This gift in its lowest form is a vision which is declared to be forty-sixth part of prophethood. And I have already stated that prophecy is granted as corroborative testimony of the truth. Thus it will be seen that those who receive the gift of prophecy acquire a certain resemblance with prophets. Hence there is also a saying of the Holy Prophet which speaks of the learned men from among his followers as “the like of the prophets of Israel.” For these reasons, those who receive the gift of prophecy may metaphorically be called prophets though they *are not prophets* in the strict terminology of the Islamic law.

Are we right in speaking of such persons as metaphorically prophets who receive the gift of prophecy from God? It is asserted that there is no authority in the Holy Quran or in the Hadith reports for such a liberal use of the word. But it should be borne in mind that no authority is in fact needed for using a word metaphorically. Men have been called gods metaphorically in sacred literature, and the phrase “son of God” was also a metaphor, but unfortunately the Christians have taken it for a reality, a mistake which is now being followed by M. Mahmud and his party. The very word *metaphor* is a guarantee that the use of the word in this sense does not convey the significance of the original. And the word *apostle* which carries almost the same significance as the word *prophet* has been used metaphorically in the Holy Quran itself. Thus in the 36th chapter of the Holy Book (vv. 13–19) the *messengers* spoken of were, according to all commentators, not messengers in the strict sense of the word, for these were the disciples of Jesus.¹⁸ Hence the word *prophet* may be metaphorically applied to one who receives the gift of prophecy in an eminent degree.¹⁹

Use of the word prophet concerning the Promised Messiah.

It was just in this metaphorical sense that the Promised Messiah made use of the word *prophet* concerning himself, *viz.*, as the recipient of the gift of prophecy; and to be clear I may quote one of his latest writings, *Haqīqat-ul-Wahy*, in which he thus speaks of himself:

“And I am called a prophet by God by way of metaphor, not in the real sense.” (p. 64, Supplement in Arabic)

But more of this hereafter. The question of paramount importance is, why did he call himself a prophet at all even by way of metaphor? What particular need had he for doing so? Could he not avoid the use of the word, so that the misconception which is now proving so harmful to the cause of Islam and to the cause of the Ahmadiyya movement itself should have never occurred?

To understand this necessity, we must resort to his very first pronouncement on the subject which occurs in *Tauzīh-i-Marām*,

his first writing after the claim to Promised Messiahship. I will quote his own words:

“If objection be raised here that as the Messiah (Jesus) was a prophet, his like should also be a prophet, the first answer to this is that our lord and master (the Holy Prophet) has not made prophethood a necessary condition for the Messiah to come. On the other hand, it is clearly written that he shall be a Muslim, and shall be subject to the Shariah of the Quran like ordinary Muslims, and he shall not go further than this that he is a Muslim and the *imam* of Muslims. Besides this, there is no doubt that I have appeared as a *muhaddas** for this people, and the *muhaddas* is in one sense a prophet, though he does not obtain perfect prophethood, but partially he is a prophet, for he possesses the eminence of being spoken to by God and unseen matters are revealed to him, and his revelation, like that of the prophets and the apostles, is kept safe from the interference of the devil and the essence of the Shariah is made manifest to him, and just like prophets he appears as one commanded (by God), and like prophets it is binding on him that he should proclaim himself aloud, and anyone who denies him is to a certain extent deserving of punishment. And the meaning of prophethood is only this that the above-mentioned characteristics should be met with in him.

“And if it be objected that the door to prophethood is closed, and the revelation which the prophets received has had a seal set on it, I say the door to prophethood is not absolutely closed nor is the seal set on revelation in every way; rather, the door of revelation and prophethood is partially open for this people always, but it should be borne in mind with great care that this prophethood which shall always continue is not perfect prophethood but, as I have already said, it is only a partial prophethood, which,

*One spoken to by God though not a prophet. — *Author's note.*

in other words, receives the name of *muhaddasiyyat* which may be attained by following the perfect man who possesses all the excellences of perfect prophethood, i.e., the person of admirable qualities of our lord and master, Muhammad Mustafa, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him.” (2nd edition, p. 9)

I have given this lengthy quotation to clear the position of the Promised Messiah, but before proceeding further I think it necessary to supplement it by another explanation in *Izāla Auhām* which runs as follows:

“And as for the Messiah that has passed away, it has been clearly stated that he was a prophet, but the Messiah to come has been called an *ummatī* (i.e., a follower of a prophet) as the hadith ‘your *imam* from among you’ shows. And in the hadith, ‘the learned from among my followers are like the prophets of the Israelites,’ a hint has been given as to the coming of the like of the Messiah; so that according to this the Messiah to come, on account of being a *muhaddas*, is metaphorically a prophet.” (p. 349)

“There is no claim of prophethood (by me); on the contrary, the claim is of *muhaddasiyyat* which has been put forward by the command of God. And what doubt there is in this that *muhaddasiyyat* also possesses a strong offshoot of prophethood. ... If this is looked upon as prophethood metaphorically, or if it is taken to be a strong offshoot of prophethood, does this mean laying claim to prophethood?” (p. 422)

“Yes, it is true that the Messiah to come has also been spoken of as a prophet, but he has also been called a follower; nay, it was foretold that he shall be from among you, O followers (of the Prophet), and he shall be your *imam*; and not only has his being a follower been expressed in words, but it has also been practically shown that, like the followers of the Prophet, he shall only be a follower of the word of God and of the sayings of the

Holy Prophet, and he shall solve the difficult and intricate religious questions by *ijtihād* (judgment and reason) not by prophethood, and shall say his prayers after others. Now all these references show clearly that he shall not actually and really possess the qualification of perfect prophethood. However, a defective prophethood shall be found in him which is in other words called *muhaddasiyyat* and possesses one aspect of the different aspects of perfect prophethood. So the fact that he has been called a *prophet* (*nabī*) as well as a *follower* (*ummatī*) points to the conclusion that he shall possess both aspects, the aspect of prophethood and the aspect of being a follower, as it is necessary in a *muhaddas* that both these aspects should exist.” (pp. 532, 533)

Reconciling finality of prophethood with the coming of the Messiah.

These quotations would show the reader that the Promised Messiah was confronted with the great difficulty that, on the one hand, the Holy Quran and the sayings of the Holy Prophet were conclusive as to the finality of prophethood in the person of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him; and on the other, reliable sayings of the Holy Prophet spoke of the advent of the Messiah who was a prophet, and in one report (that of Nawas bin Sam‘an as accepted by *Sahih Muslim*), the Messiah to come was even spoken of as a prophet. What was to be the solution of the difficulty? If a prophet appeared after the founder of Islam, the Holy Prophet could not be spoken of as the seal of the prophets. Yet there were authentic sayings speaking of the advent of the Messiah who was a prophet. The Muslim theologians never tried to solve the difficulty, and really they had no need to solve it. But when the prophecy came to fulfilment it became necessary that the difficulty in connection with the appearance of a prophet after the last of the prophets should be solved. And the quotations given above are a clear solution of the difficulty. That the Holy Prophet was the last of prophets was a principle upon which was laid the

basis of the unity of Islam, and a principle could not be violated for the sake of having a prophecy fulfilled literally. On the other hand, the prophecy had to receive an interpretation which should make it tally with the principles laid down. This is what the Promised Messiah did. He did not think of violating the principle of the finality of prophethood, nor did he entertain the idea of rejecting the sayings of the Holy Prophet foretelling the advent of the Messiah, but he interpreted the latter in such a way as to make it subject to the principle laid down. A prophet could not appear in the real sense of the word but a *muhaddas*, i.e., a non-prophet spoken to by God and receiving the gift of Divine prophecy, could metaphorically be called a prophet. So he interpreted the word *prophet* occurring in a single report metaphorically, and as I have already shown, the metaphorical use of a word in such a case where strong resemblance is borne to the original is permissible. And he stuck to this position to the last. I have quoted both his first and last writings and I may here add a passage from *Sirāj Munīr*, a writing of the middle period, showing that he always used the word *prophet* in connection with his name in a metaphorical sense:

“We admit and hold that in the real sense of prophethood neither a new nor an old prophet can appear after the Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him. The Holy Quran is a bar to the appearance of such prophets. But in a metaphorical sense Almighty God may speak of an inspired servant of His as a prophet (*nabī*) or as an apostle (*mursal*). Have you not read the Hadith reports in which the words *apostle of the Apostle of God* occur? ... Why is it then prohibited to God that He should use the word apostle metaphorically.... I say repeatedly that the words apostle, messenger and prophet (*rasūl, mursal, nabī*) no doubt occur in my revelations from God, but they do not carry their real significance. And as these words do not carry their actual significance, so the name *prophet* by which the Promised Messiah is mentioned in

Hadith reports does not convey the real significance of that word. This is the knowledge which God has given me.” (p. 3)

Root meaning of *nabī* and *rasūl*.

That the word *prophet* has been used by the Promised Messiah concerning himself in a metaphorical sense is clear from the quotations given above. There are, however, two more points of view of the use of this word. The one is that literally a prophet is one who makes a prophecy and hence he uses the word prophet for a prophecy-maker. This use of the word is altogether different from its use in the strict terminology of the Islamic law, as he himself writes in *Arbaʿīn* No. 2 where, commenting upon the word *rasūl* (apostle) occurring in one of his revelations, he says in a footnote:

“These words are by way of metaphor, just as in a Hadith report the word *prophet* has been used concerning the Promised Messiah. It is evident that he whom God sends is His messenger and a messenger is called *rasūl* in Arabic, and he who makes known news of the future, receiving information from God, is called *nabī* (prophet) in Arabic. The significance according to Islamic terminology is different. Here only the root meaning is taken.” (p. 18)

This he has explained in his writings repeatedly, and quotations may be multiplied to any extent but I will finish with one more taken from a letter written on the 17th August 1899 published in *Al-Hakam*:

“And the words *nabī* (prophet) and *rasūl* (apostle) are only used figuratively and metaphorically. In Arabic lexicology, *risālat* means *being sent*, and *nubuwwat* means *the stating of hidden truths and deep significances*.... But as in the terminology of Islam the meaning of *nabī* and *rasūl* is this that they bring a perfect law, or abrogate some commandments of a previously existing law, or are not called the

followers of a previous prophet and have connection with God independently of any prophet, therefore one ought to be very cautious so as not to understand the same significance here.”

Sufi terminology.

The other point is that in the Sufi terminology there is a stage in spiritual progress known as *fanā fir-rasūl*, the significance of which is that a man so completely follows the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be on him, that he retains no desire of his own, losing as it were his own self in the Prophet. When a man attains to this stage, all difference between him and the Prophet whom he follows is said to disappear. The Promised Messiah claimed to have attained to this stage and therefore in the Sufi terminology he spoke of himself as Muhammad and Ahmad, and as a prophet and apostle, nay even as *Khātam-un-Nabiyyin* or the seal of prophets. This in Sufi terminology is known as *burūz* or manifestation of the characteristics of one person in another. This is the point of view which he adopts in *Ek ghaltī ka izāla* and other writings where he speaks of himself as a perfect *burūz* of the Holy Prophet and adopts his very names and titles as he says:

“For the picture of *burūz* cannot be complete until it possesses the excellences of the original in every aspect. Therefore as prophethood is an excellence in the prophet, it is necessary that that excellence should also be made manifest in the *burūz*. . . . Therefore in this case it is evident that, as on account of *burūz* when one is called Muhammad and Ahmad there are not two Muhammads and Ahmads, so being called a prophet or apostle in the capacity of *burūz* it does not follow that the seal of the finality of prophethood is broken, for the person who is *burūz* is at one with the original.” (*Ek ghaltī ka izāla*)²⁰

In spite of this, he clearly prohibited the use of the word *prophet* concerning himself as it gave rise to misunderstanding. For instance, in 1892 a controversy on the use of the word

prophet was brought to a close when the Promised Messiah made a declaration, signed by witnesses, from which I take the following quotation:

“From the beginning, as God knows best, my intention has never been to use this word *nabī* as meaning actually a *prophet*, but only as signifying a *muhaddas*.... Therefore I have not the least hesitation in stating my meaning in another form for the conciliation of my Muslim brethren, and that other form is that, in every place, instead of the word *nabī* they should understand the word *muhaddas*, and look upon the word *nabī* as having been deleted.”²¹

Later on, he wrote for the guidance of his own followers in his letter, dated 17th August 1899, published in *Al-Hakam*:

“There are many such revelations in which the word *prophet* (*nabī*) or *apostle* (*rasūl*) occurs concerning me, but he is mistaken who thinks that by this prophethood and apostleship is meant actual prophethood and apostleship by which a man is called the giver of a law. Rather the word *apostle* only means *one sent by God* and the word *prophet* only means *one giving out a prophecy* obtaining knowledge from God or making known hidden significances. But as such words, which are used only metaphorically, create a dissension in Islam, and the consequences are very grave, therefore these words should not be used by my followers in their ordinary conversation and daily parlance, and it should be believed with true faith of the heart that prophethood has been brought to a termination in the Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him.”

Again he writes in *Al-Wasiyyat*, published in December 1905, speaking of the prophethood of Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him:

“Therefore all prophethoods have been brought to a close in this prophethood, and thus it ought to have been, for everything which has a beginning has also an end. But this

prophethood of Muhammad does not fall short of imparting its grace to others, nay, the grace it imparts is far greater than the grace of all prophethoods. Following this prophethood makes a man attain to God very easily, and following it the love of God and the favour of being spoken to and addressed by God are granted in a much greater degree than they were granted before. But the perfect follower of it cannot be called a prophet only, for this is derogatory to the perfect prophethood of Muhammad.” (p. 10)

Promised Messiah’s belief in the finality of prophethood.

What has been said above is sufficient to show that the Promised Messiah justified the occurrence of the word *prophet* in his revelations and in a Hadith report concerning his appearance by the explanation that it was used metaphorically, otherwise a prophet in the real sense of the word could not come. The question, in fact, which decides this controversy finally is, whether the Promised Messiah believed in the finality of the prophethood of the Holy Prophet, or whether, like M. Mahmud, he believed that thousands of prophets would appear after him. This is a question to which only one answer can be given from the writings of the Promised Messiah, and that answer is that he was highly jealous of the finality of the prophethood of Muhammad, so much so that he wrote in *Izāla Auhām* that should Gabriel even once bring down revelation of prophethood after the Holy Prophet Muhammad, the seal of finality would be broken:

“It is evident that should the coming of revelation be supposed even once, and Gabriel should bring but one sentence and then be silent, still this is opposed to the finality of prophethood; for when the seal of finality is broken, and the revelation of apostleship begins to come down, then it is the same whether the revelations are a few

or many. Every wise man can understand that if God is true to his promise, and the promise which has been given in the *Khātam-un-Nabiyyin* verse and which is made very explicit in the Hadith reports, that after the death of the Holy Prophet, Gabriel has for ever been prevented from bringing down the revelation of prophethood, if all these things are true and right, then no one can come as an apostle after our Holy Prophet.” (p. 577)

This book, *Izāla Auhām*, is full of statements like this in which the greatest stress is laid upon the finality of the prophethood of Muhammad.²² In one place it is even stated that should a prophet appear after our Holy Prophet, nothing shall remain of Islam.²³ Other books following it lay stress upon the same point.²⁴ He also accepts that the verse speaking of the seal of prophets is explained by the saying “there is no prophet after me.”²⁵

Later writings.

An attempt has been made by M. Mahmud to lead people into the false belief that the Promised Messiah had changed his views concerning the finality of prophethood in the year 1901, but there is not a grain of truth in it. I give below some quotations from books written after 1901. I have already quoted *Al-Wasiyyat* which was published in December 1905 where it is plainly stated that:

“all prophethoods have been brought to a close in this prophethood (of the Holy Prophet Muhammad), and thus it ought to have been, for everything which has a beginning has also an end.”

These are very plain words showing that the Promised Messiah believed that prophethood ended with the Holy Prophet. I take next *Mawāhib-ur-Rahmān*, published in 1903, in which he writes:

“And God speaks to and addresses his *auliya* (friends) among this *Umma*, and they are given the colouring of prophets but they are not really prophets, for the Quran

has made perfect the needs of the Shariah.” (p. 66)

This quotation is very conclusive. Here we are told that Divine revelation is granted to the righteous among the Muslims, and they are given even the appearance of prophets but they are not actually prophets. But it is in the reason given that a decisive verdict is contained on the finality of prophethood. The reason for their not being actually prophets is that the Quran had made the law (Shariah) perfect. Now that reason stands equally in the case of all Muslims; and no one who believes in the perfection of the Quran can claim prophethood. Men receive revelation and they are given the appearance of prophets but they are not prophets, for the Quran is perfect. It follows from this that such persons would have been prophets if the Quran had not been made perfect. In other words, a prophet could only arise among the Muslims if the Quran had been imperfect, but as it is not, no one can actually be a prophet.

But I may add that even *Haqīqat-ul-Wahy* contains express words showing that the Promised Messiah believed in the finality of the prophethood of Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him. This is one of his latest writings and here we are told in the Arabic Supplement:

“And prophethood has been cut off after our Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, ... except that I have been called a prophet by the tongue of the best of men (the Holy Prophet) ... and God does not mean anything by my prophethood except being spoken to (by Him) frequently, and the curse of God be on him who intends anything beyond this... And surely our Apostle is the *Khātam-un-nabiyyin*, and with him is cut off the chain of apostles; so no one has the right to claim prophethood substantially after our Holy Apostle and nothing remains after him but abundance of revelation ... And I have been named a prophet by God by way of metaphor, not in a real sense.” (pp. 64, 65)

This quotation is alone sufficient to settle the controversy. Here the chain of apostles is plainly stated to have been cut off,

and prophethood is also stated to have been cut off, and what remains after that is "being spoken to by God", which shows clearly that merely being often spoken to by God is not prophethood, for here we are told that while prophethood has been cut off, "being spoken to by God" remains, thus showing clearly that the two are not identical, and that the mere abundance of revelation does not raise a person to the dignity of prophethood.

There is one quotation which, by suppressing its concluding words, has often been put forward in support of the new doctrine that thousands of prophets would appear after the Holy Prophet Muhammad. On p. 97 of *Haqīqat-ul-Wahy*, the Promised Messiah writes:

"For God made the Holy Prophet the possessor of seal, i.e., He gave to him a seal to impart excellences to others as has not been given to any other prophet. Hence he was called the seal of prophets (*Khātam-un-Nabiyyin*), i.e., by following him the excellences of prophethood are obtained, and his spiritual direction gives (to men) the shape of prophets, and this power of holiness has not been granted to any other prophet. This is the meaning of the Hadith report 'The learned men from among my followers are like the prophets of Israel'.... The followers of Moses and Jesus had, generally speaking, no *auliya* (saints) among them, and if rarely there was one such among them, he may be treated as null." (p. 97)

This quotation shows what the Promised Messiah meant when he spoke of a seal being given to the Holy Prophet for the transmission to his followers of the excellences of prophethood. All this is explained by the saying of the Holy Prophet that learned men among his followers were like the prophets of Israel. The significance is therefore clear: he meant that not prophets, but learned men who resembled prophets, would appear among his followers, and this was the significance of a seal being given to the Holy Prophet for the transmission of prophetic excellences, which, continuing to the day of judgment, so increased

the number of *men like prophets* among his followers that among the followers of previous prophets such men were as nothing compared with them. This is what he calls the *zillī nubuwwat*, (i.e., reflected prophethood) that is to be met with among the Muslims to the day of judgment, as he writes on p. 28 of *Haqīqat-ul-Wahy*:

“For substantial prophethood has been brought to a close with the Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, but *zillī nubuwwat* (reflected prophethood) which means the receiving of revelation by the grace of Muhammad, that shall remain to the day of judgment, so that the door to the perfection of men may not be closed, and so that this sign may not be obliterated that the resolution of the Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, has desired that the doors of being spoken to by God should remain open till the day of judgment.”

Here we have the *zillī nubuwwat* (or *prophethood as reflected in a follower of a prophet*) clearly explained by the Promised Messiah himself. It is not actual prophethood but it is the same gift of receiving Divine revelation by faithfully following the Holy Prophet that makes the learned *men like prophets*.²⁶ The Promised Messiah has explained this point with a clearness which does not leave the least doubt, and the man who holds that thousands of prophets would appear after the Holy Prophet intentionally perverts his clear writings on the point.

Before concluding I may, however, refer to *Haqīqat-ul-Wahy* p. 391, which is often cited to upset all that is written in hundreds of places elsewhere. There we find the following words:

“In short, in this abundance of Divine revelation and matters relating to the unseen, I am an individual chosen in particular, and all the *auliya* and *abdāl* and *aqtāb* (i.e., the great Muslim saints) that have passed away before me were not granted this abundance. Therefore I have been chosen particularly to receive the name of prophet.”

That he received the name of prophet metaphorically, *not in a real sense*, is further on stated in the same book in the supplement which I have already quoted more than once. Therefore even this quotation does not entitle us to call the Promised Messiah a prophet unless we use the word metaphorically. And it is not difficult to understand what is meant by his being chosen in particular to receive the name of prophet, for there he is speaking of the prophecy regarding the advent of the Promised Messiah in which occurs the word 'prophet' which is not spoken of any other personage among the Muslims.²⁷ Thus we have before the words quoted above:

"Now let it be known that in the Hadith reports of the Holy Prophet it has been foretold that from among the followers of the Holy Prophet a person shall be born who shall be called 'Isā (Jesus) and son of Mary, and be given the name 'prophet', i.e., he shall have the gift of being spoken to by God in such abundance, and so largely shall matters relating to the unseen be made known to him, as cannot be revealed to any but a prophet." (p. 390)

Why that word *prophet* occurs concerning the Promised Messiah, and what the significance is that is to be attached to it, has already been explained. All that is necessary to state here is that the word prophet occurs in a Hadith report in which occur also the words '*Isā (Jesus) son of Mary*', in which it is stated that he shall appear on the eastern minaret of Damascus, which goes on to tell us that he shall appear in two yellow mantles, with his hands on the shoulders of two angels. If all these names and descriptions are metaphorical, why not the word *prophet*? Even if the Promised Messiah had not written that the word prophet in that report was to be taken metaphorically, we had no other choice, for every single word of that report is metaphorical. And strangely enough, the word *prophet* does not occur concerning the Promised Messiah in any other report in the numerous prophecies concerning his appearance except in this report, not a single word of which can be interpreted otherwise than metaphorically. Stranger still, this very report as accepted by

Tirmizī, though narrated by the same first narrator Nawas bin Sam‘an who is the first narrator of *Muslim*, omits the word *prophet* altogether.²⁸

But besides all these considerations, we have the plain words of the Messiah himself that the word prophet in that report is to be taken metaphorically, and not in the real sense of the word. As the quotation has been given above I need not repeat it.