

Discussion regarding Imamate

Well-Wisher: You good people are aware that the word "Imam" has many meanings. Literally it means "leader." Imam al-Jama'at means "one who leads the congregational prayers." He may also be the leader of men in political or spiritual matters. Imam al-Jum'a means "one who leads the Jum'a prayers." Therefore, the Sunnis, followers of the four schools of law, call their leaders "Imams," such as Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Malik, Imam Shafi'i, and Imam Hanbal.

These theologians and jurists are their leaders in religious matters, and they have set forth religious laws based on their research or on their own speculation regarding the lawfulness of actions.

Accordingly, when we study the books of jurisprudence of the four Imams, we find many differences among them concerning the fundamentals of faith and the articles of the practice of the faith.

Similarly, all sects have such leaders, and among the Shi'as the ulama' and jurists hold the same position. With the disappearance of our living Imam of the Age, they issue legal pronouncements based on their knowledge of the Holy Qur'an, the authentic sayings of the Prophet, and the apostolic Imams.

But we do not call them Imams because the Imamate belongs exclusively to the twelve successors, descendants of the Prophet. There is another difference. The Sunnis later closed the door of ijtihad (striving to interpret the law).

From the fifth century A.H. when, by order of the king, the opinions formulated by the ulama' and jurists were collected, the so-called Imamate was confined to the four Imams, and the four schools of law (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali) were established. People were forced to follow one of them, as is the practice at the present time. It is not known on what grounds following one Imam is preferable. What characteristics does the Imam of the Hanafis possess which the Imam of Malikis does not?

What characteristics does the Imam of the Shafi'is possess which the Imam of Hanbalis does not? And if the Islamic world is forced to confine itself to following one of the four schools, then the progress of the Muslim community is totally blocked, even though Islam teaches us that we should move forward with the times. To do this, we need the guidance of the ulama'.

There are many matters in which we should not follow the verdict of a deceased mujtahid (from jihad, to strive, meaning in this case, one who strives to interpret and to formulate religious practice and law, as ijtihad refers to the process of striving) but should turn to the living mujtahid for guidance.

Many mujtahids were born later among you who were of higher rank in learning than those four "Imams." I do not know why preference is given to the latter so that none but they may be followed and the right of others ignored. In Shi'as jurisprudence, mujtahids in every age until the appearance of the Holy Imam of our time have the right to practice. In regard to new problems, we cannot follow the verdict of a deceased mujtahid.

Limitation to four schools of law has no basis

It is strange that you call the Shi'as innovators and worshippers of the dead. They follow the injunctions of the twelve Imams, the descendants of the Prophet. However, it is not known on what grounds you attempt to force Muslims to follow the Ash'aris or Mu'tazalis regarding the fundamentals (usul) and one of the four Imams in the articles of the practice (furu') of the faith.

Those who do not follow them are called Rafizis. Since Abu'l-Hasan Ash'ari, Abu Hanifa, Maliki Ibn Anas Muhammad Ibn Idris Shafi'i, and Ahmad Ibn Hanbal were like many other Muslim ulama' and jurists, and since there is no injunction from the Holy Prophet to follow them, the restriction to follow them alone is an innovation. If I were to make this charge, what would you say in reply?

Hafiz: Since the four Imams possessed a high degree of devotion to Allah, piety, uprightness, and integrity, along with a vast knowledge of jurisprudence, it has become necessary for us to follow them.

Well-Wisher: We are not compelled by logic to confine ourselves to follow them alone. Many others of your ulama' possessed these same qualities. The restriction to follow them alone is an insult to other ulama' of equal merit. We cannot be forced to follow any one person or persons without an authoritative instruction from the Holy Prophet. There is no such authorization by the Prophet about your four Imams. So how can you restrict religion to these four schools of law?

Shi'as'ism compared to four schools of law

Only a few nights ago you called the Shi'as sect "political," and said that since it did not exist during the Prophet's time - that it came into being during Uthman's caliphate - it was unlawful to follow it. The night before last we proved that Shi'as'ism was founded in the time of the Prophet on his own instructions. The chief of the Shi'as, the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, was brought up and trained by the Prophet from early childhood and received his religious knowledge from him.

According to the records in your own authentic books, the Holy Prophet called him the Gate of Knowledge. He explicitly said: "Obedience to 'Ali is obedience to me, and disobedience to 'Ali is disobedience to me." In a gathering of 70,000 people, he appointed him Amir and caliph and ordered all Muslims, including 'Umar and Abu Bakr, to pay allegiance to him.

But it is not known how your four schools of law came to be established, nor which of the four Imams saw neither the Prophet nor whether any authorization has been reported from the Prophet about them so as to explain why Muslims should be forced to follow them.

Without any compelling reason you follow your elders and offer nothing to authorize their Imamate except that they were great mujtahids, men of learning and piety. But, if these qualities are present to the highest degree in the progeny of the Prophet, then isn't it obligatory for us to follow them?

Are these schools of law, which have no link with the Prophet, innovations, or is that sect founded by the Prophet and led by his descendant an innovation? In the same way, there are the other eleven Imams about whom there are separate hadith showing that they are

the equals of the Holy Qur'an.

In the Hadith al-Thaqalain it is clearly stated that "Whoever is attached to these two is rescued, and whosoever stays away from them is lost." In the Hadith al-Safina the Prophet said: "Whosoever keeps aloof from them is drowned and lost." Ibn Hajar in Sawa'iq (Bab al-Wasiyyatu'n-Nabi, page 135), quotes a hadith from the Prophet saying that: "The Qur'an and my progeny are my Trusts; if you keep yourselves attached to these two, never shall you go astray."

In support of this, Ibn Hajar quotes another hadith from the Prophet about the Holy Qur'an and his purified progeny: "Do not go beyond the bounds of the Qur'an and my progeny; do not neglect them. Otherwise, you will be destroyed. And do not teach my descendants since they know more than you do."

After this, Ibn Hajar comments that the above hadith proves that the descendants of the Prophet are superior to all others in knowledge and in discharging religious responsibilities.

The four imams have declared each other to be infidels

It is, however, astonishing that, knowing that the progeny of the Prophet are superior to all others, the Sunnis follow Abu'l-Hasan Ash'ari in the fundamentals of Islam and the four Imams in the articles of practice of the faith.

To follow such a course is due to fanaticism and arrogance. And even if we suppose what you say is true, that your four Imams are worthy of your allegiance because they were learned and pious, then why has each of them accused the other of infidelity?

Hafiz: You are very unkind. You say whatever comes to mind. You malign our Imams. This statement is a lie. If anything has been said against them, it is from the Shi'as ulama'. From our side nothing has been said against them. We have shown them respect.

Well-Wisher: You apparently haven't read your ulama's books. Your own distinguished ulama' have written books concerning their rejection. Even the four Imams have charged one another with violating divine laws.

Hafiz: Who are those ulama'? What are their statements?

Well-Wisher: The companions of Abu Hanifa, Ibn Hajar ('Ali Ibn Ahmad Andalusī, who died in 456 A.H.), and others have always censured Imam Malik and Muhammad Ibn Idris Shafi'i. Similarly, the companions of Imam Shafi'i, like Imamu'l-Haramain, Imam Ghazali and others have condemned Abu Hanifa and Malik. Let me ask you something: what sort of people were Imam Shafi'i, Abu Hamid Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ghazali, and Jarullah Zamakhshari?

Hafiz: They were great jurists, learned scholars, pious men, and our Imams.

The Sunni ulama's condemnation of Abu Hanifa

Well-Wisher: Imam Shafi'i said: "There never was born a more damned person in Islam than Abu Hanifa." He also said: "I looked into the books of the companions of Abu Hanifa, and I

found in them 130 pages containing matter in opposition to the Holy Qur'an and the Sunna."

Abu Hamid Ghazali in his book 'Manqul fi Ilmi'l-Usul' says: "In fact Abu Hanifa distorted the religious code, made its way doubtful, changed its arrangement, and intermingled the laws in such a way that the code prescribed by the Holy Prophet was totally disfigured. One who does so deliberately and considers it lawful is an infidel. One who does it knowing it to be unlawful is a sinner." According to this great scholar, Abu Hanifa was either an infidel or a sinner.

Many other books condemn Abu Hanifa. Jarullah Zamakhshari, the author of 'Tafsir al-Kashshaf' and one of your pious ulama', writes in Rabi'u'l-Abrar that Yusuf Ibn Asbat said: "Abu Hanifa rejected at least 400 hadith of the Prophet of Islam." Yusuf remarked that "Abu Hanifa said: 'Had the Prophet of Islam known me, he would have accepted many of my sayings.'"

Your own ulama' have made similar criticisms of Abu Hanifa and the other three Imams. They can be found in Ghazali's 'Mutahawwal', Shafi'i's 'Nuqtu'sh-Sharifa', Zamakhshari's Rabi'u'l-Abrar, and Ibn Jauzi's Muntazim. Imam Ghazali says in his Mutahawwal, "There are many mistakes in Abu Hanifa's work. He had no knowledge of etymology, grammar, or hadith." He also writes, "Since he had no knowledge of hadith, he relied on his own conjecture. The first being who acted on conjecture was Satan."

Ibn Jauzi writes in his Muntazim, "All the ulama' are united in condemning Abu Hanifa. There are three categories of such critics: one group holds that his faith in the fundamentals of Islam was uncertain; another says that he lacked a strong memory and could not remember hadith; a third believes that he acted on conjecture and that his opinion was always at variance with the true hadith."

Your own ulama' have criticized your Imams. The Shi'as ulama' have not attributed anything to them except what your own ulama' have said about them. On the other hand, there is no difference of opinion among the Shi'as ulama' concerning the position of the twelve Imams.

We regard the Holy imams as the pupils of the same teaching. These Imams - all of them - acted according to divine laws which the last of the Prophets gave them. They never acted on conjecture or approved of innovations. What they said or did agreed with the sayings of the Prophet. Hence, there was no difference among them.

Imamate according to Shi'as means vicegerency of Allah

According to the definition given by the ulama', the Imamate or Vicegerency of Allah, is one of the fundamentals of Islam. We believe that the Imamate is the Vicegerency of Allah for all of creation and the Khilafat al-Rasul (successors of the Prophet) for this world and the hereafter. Therefore, it is obligatory for all mankind to follow its tenants in all matters, temporal as well as spiritual.

Sheikh: It would be better if you did not declare categorically that the Imamate is included in the fundamentals of the faith, since the great ulama' of Islam deny its inclusion. It is included in the articles of the practice of the faith. Your ulama' have made it a part of the

fundamentals.

Well-Wisher: My statement is not confined to the Imamate of the Shi'as. Even your great ulama' have the same belief. One of them is your famous commentator Qazi Baidhawi, who says in his 'Minhaju'l-Usul' in connection with the discussion on narrations of hadith, "The Imamate is one of the fundamental principles of the faith, whose denial and opposition leads to infidelity and innovation."

Mulla 'Ali Qushachi says in 'Sharh al-Tajrid', "The Imamate is the general vicegerent of Allah for both the affairs of this world and religion, like the caliphate of the Prophet." And Qazi Ruzbahan, one of the most fanatical of your ulama', points to the same meaning. He says: "The Imamate, according to the followers of Abu'l-Hasan Ash'ari, is the vicegerency of the Prophet of Islam for establishing the faith and safeguarding the interests of the Muslim community.

All the followers are bound in duty to comply with its dictates. Had the Imamate not been a part of the articles of the practice of the faith, the Prophet would not have said that 'Whosoever dies not knowing the Imam of his age, dies the death of ignorance.'"

This has been quoted by your distinguished ulama', like Hamidi in 'Jam'i-Bainu's-Sahihain' and Mulla As'ad Taftazani in 'Sharhe Aqa'id al-Nasafi'. Not knowing a single article of the practice of the faith would not be equivalent to ignorance stated by Baidhawi about not knowing the fundamentals, namely that ignorance of them is the cause of infidelity. Therefore, the Imamate is one of the fundamentals of the faith and is the completing stage of prophethood.

Hence, there is a vast difference between the concept of our Imamate, and those interpreted by you. You call your 'ulama' Imams, such as Imam Azam, and Imam Maliki. But, this is in the verbal sense. We also use the terms 'Imam al-Juma'a, and 'Imam al-Jama'at.

So there may be hundreds of Imams at one time, but in the technical sense in which we use the word "Imam," it means vicegerency of Allah. In this sense there is only one Imam at one time. The noble qualities of knowledge, magnanimity, valor, devotion to Allah, and piety have been perfected in him.

He surpasses humanity in all merits and occupies a state of infallibility. The world shall not be without such an Imam until the Day of Judgement. An Imam of such excellence is at the highest stage of spiritual attainment. Such an Imam is divinely commissioned and is appointed by the Holy Prophet. He surpasses all creation, including the prophets of the past.

Hafiz: On the one hand you condemn the Ghalis, and on the other hand, you yourself unduly praise the Imams and consider their position higher than that of the prophets. Common sense denies this, and the Holy Qur'an has also declared that the prophets are placed at the highest rank. Their position lies between Divine Self-Existence and the possible. Since your assertion is not supported by reason it cannot be accepted.

[The rank of imamate is higher than that of general prophethood](#)

Well-Wisher: You have not yet asked on what grounds I have made this statement, and therefore you say it is without reason. The best proof for my statement is the Holy Qur'an, which, narrating the life of the Prophet Abraham, says that, after giving him three tests (of life, wealth, and sons), Allah intended to make his rank more exalted.

Since prophethood and the title of Khalil (Friend) did not apparently warrant a higher rank, the office of Imamate was the only office of a higher order to which even a Prophet of Allah could be entrusted.

The Holy Qur'an says:

"And when his Lord tried Abraham with certain words, he fulfilled them. He said: 'Surely I will make you an Imam of men.' Abraham said: 'And of my offspring?' 'My covenant does not include the unjust,' He said." (2:124)

This verse, which indicates the position of the Imamate, also proves that the rank of the Imamate is superior to that of prophethood, since the position of the Prophet Abraham was raised from prophethood to the Imamate.

Hafiz: This means, according to your reasoning, that 'Ali's position was superior to that of the last Prophet. This is what the Ghalis believed, as you have yourself admitted.

General and special prophethood

Well-Wisher: I do not mean what you have concluded. As you know, there is a great difference between general prophethood, and special prophethood. The rank of the Imamate is higher than the rank of general prophethood, but lower than special prophethood. The last Prophet is the highest stage of special prophethood.

Nawab: Excuse my interruption. Weren't all the prophets sent by Allah? They are undoubtedly of the same rank. The Holy Qur'an says:

"We do not differentiate between any of the prophets." (2:285)

Then why have you differentiated between them and divided prophethood into two categories, general and special?

Well-Wisher: Of course this verse is true in its proper context. That is, so far as achieving the aim of prophethood is concerned (which means teaching the people about existence of Allah, the Day of Judgement, and the training of their minds), all the prophets from Adam to the last of the prophets, are equal. But they differ in their qualities, achievements, and rank.

Differences in the rank of the prophets

Is a prophet who was sent to guide 1,000 people equal to one who sent to guide 30,000 people or to one sent to guide all of humanity? Let's take an example. Is the teacher of first-grade students equal to a teacher of fourth-grade students? Are the teachers of higher classes equal to professors or university teachers?

All belong to the same administration and work under the same general program, their aim being to educate students. Yet, in view of the teacher's knowledge, they are not equal.

Each is different from the other according to his learning, ability, and achievement. From the point of view of the aim of prophethood, all the prophets of Allah are equal. However, because of differences in rank and knowledge, they are different. The Holy Qur'an says:

"We have made some of these Apostles to excel the others; among them are they to whom Allah spoke, and some of them He exalted by (many degrees of) rank." (2:253)

Your own Jarullah Zamakhshari says in his Tafsir al-Kushshaf that the above verse means that our Prophet was superior in rank to all others because of his special merits, the most important of which was that he was the last of the prophets.

Nawab: I am glad you solved this problem, but I have another question, though it is somewhat irrelevant. Please tell us briefly the main characteristics of special prophethood.

Well-Wisher: There are many qualities peculiar to special prophethood, and there are innumerable reasons proving how one prophet of all of them is the special prophet of Allah. In fact, that stage concludes the cycle of prophethood.

But these sessions are not arranged to prove the prophethood of Allah for Muslims. If we were to discuss this topic fully, we would drift from the topic of the Imamate. I will, however, briefly discuss the point.

Characteristics of special prophethood

The perfection of humanity lies in the perfection of the soul. Moral and spiritual perfection cannot be attained without purifying the soul. This purification is impossible unless one is guided by the power of wisdom. One is then able to rise higher and higher with the force of knowledge, and right action until he reaches the acme of humanity, as has been explained by 'Ali. He said: "Man has been created with the power of speech, which is the essence of humanity.

If speech is adorned with knowledge and action, it resembles the existence of the ethereal realm, which is the origin of man's creation. When his speech reaches the place of temperance and is cleared of all physical matter; it becomes one with the ethereal realm. Then it leaves the animal world and reaches the highest stage of humanity."

Man's power of articulation renders him superior to all existence. But there is one condition attached to it: that he cleanse his soul of all impurities with knowledge and right action. These two factors in man are like two wings of a bird, which fly higher according to the strength of the wings. Similarly, man's level of human attainment rises according to his knowledge, and right action. To pass beyond the province of animality and to reach the sphere of humanity depends upon the perfection of the soul.

The man who combines in himself the faculties of knowledge and right action and reaches the third of three classes of men (the common people, the elite, and the most elite), arrives at the lowest stage of prophethood. When such a man becomes the object of Allah's special attention, he becomes a prophet. Of course prophethood also has different stages. A prophet may reach the highest point in the highest of these three classes.

This rank is the highest in the sphere of possibility, which the sages call the First Wisdom, and which is the First Effect or the First Consequence. There is no rank higher than this in

the realm of existence. This position is occupied by the last of the prophets, who is second to none except the First Cause. When the Prophet was raised to this highest stage, prophethood was concluded.

The Imamate is a stage lower than the highest stage of prophethood, but it is a stage higher than all other ranks of prophethood. Since 'Ali was raised to the stage higher than prophethood and was one in spirit with the Holy Prophet, he was endowed with the office of the Imamate and was thus superior to all previous prophets.

Hafiz: The last part of your remarks is perplexing. First, you say that 'Ali was at the stage of prophethood; second, that he was one in spirit with the Prophet Muhammad; third, that he was superior to the other prophets. What are your arguments to prove the truth of your assertions?

Arguments for the rank of prophethood for 'Ali from hadith of manzila

Well-Wisher: That 'Ali attained the rank of prophethood can be proven by the reference to the Hadith of 'Manzila' (Tradition Regarding Ranks), which has been unanimously narrated in more or less the same words. The last of the Holy prophets repeated a number of times and in different congregations: "Are you not content that you are to me what Aaron was to Moses, except that there shall be no prophet after me?" On other occasions he said to his followers: "'Ali is to me as Aaron was to Moses."

Hafiz: The authenticity of this hadith has not been proven. Even if it were proven to be true, it would be a single narration and therefore unacceptable.

Authenticity of hadith of manzila from the usual sources

Well-Wisher: In providing information regarding the genuineness of this hadith, I will refer to your books. It is not a single narration. It has been authenticated by your own distinguished ulama', like Suyuti, Hakim Nishapuri, and others, who have proved its reliability with unanimous sources. Some of them are the following:

- (1) Abu Abdullah Bukhari in his Sahih, Volume III, the Book of Ghazawa, Qazwa Tabuk, p. 54, and in his book Bida'u'l-Khalq, p. 180;
- (2) Muslim ibn Hajjaj in his Sahih, printed in Egypt, 1290 A.H., Volume II, under the heading, "The Merits of 'Ali;" pages 236-7;
- (3) Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal in 'Musnad', Volume I, "Grounds for Naming Husain," pages 98, 118, 119; and footnote of the same book, Part 5, page 31;
- (4) Abu Abdu'r-Rahman Nisa'i in 'Khasa'isi'l-Alawiyya', page 19;
- (5) Muhammad ibn Sura Tirmidhi in his Jami';
- (6) Hafiz Ibn Hajar Asqalani in Isaba, Volume II, page 507;
- (7) Ibn Hajar Makki in 'Sawa'iq Muhriqa', chapter 9, pages 30 and 34,

- (8) Hakim Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Abdullah Nishapuri in 'Mustadrak', Volume III, page 109;
- (9) Jalalu'd-Din Suyuti in 'Ta'rikhu'l-Khulafa', page 65;
- (10) Ibn Abd Rabbih in 'Iqdu'l-Farid', Volume II, page 194;
- (11) Ibn Abdu'l-Birr in 'Isti'ab', Volume 2, page 473;
- (12) Muhammad ibn Sa'd Katib Waqidi in 'Tabaqatu'l-Kubra';
- (13) Imam Fakhru'd-Din Razi in 'Tafsir Mafatihul-Ghaib';
- (14) Muhammad ibn Jarir Tabari in his 'Tafsir'; as well as in his 'Ta'rikh';
- (15) Sayyid Mu'min Shablanji in Nuru'l-Absar, page 68;
- (16) Kamalu'd-Din Abu Salim Muhammad ibn Talha Shafi'i in 'Matalibu's-Su'ul', page 17;
- (17) Mir Sayyid 'Ali ibn Shahabu'd-Din Hamadani in 'Mawaddatu'l-Qurba', towards the end of Mawadda 7;
- (18) Nuru'd-Din 'Ali ibn Muhammad Maliki Makki, known as Ibn Sabbagh Maliki, in 'Fusulu'l-Muhimma', pages 23 and 125;
- (19) 'Ali ibn Burhanu'd-Din Shafi'i in 'Siratu'l-Halabiyya', Volume II, page 49;
- (20) Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in 'Yanabiu'l-Mawadda',
- (21) Mulla 'Ali Muttaqi in 'Kanzu'l-Ummal', Volume VI pages 152-153;
- (22) Ahmad ibn 'Ali Khatib in 'Ta'rikh Baghdad';
- (23) Ibn Maghazili Shafi'i in 'Manaqib';
- (24) Muwaffaq ibn Ahmad Khawarizmi in 'Manaqib';
- (25) Ibn Athir Jazari 'Ali ibn Muhammad in 'Usudu'l-Ghaiba';
- (26) Ibn Kathir Damishqi in his 'Ta'rikh';
- (27) Ala'u'd-Daula Ahmad ibn Muhammad in 'Urwatu'l-Wuthqa';
- (28) Ibn Athir Mubarak ibn Muhammad Shaibani in 'Jami'u'l-Usul';
- (29) Ibn Hajar Asqalani in 'Tahdhibu't-Tahdhib';
- (30) Abu'l Qasim Husain ibn Muhammad Raghif Isfahani in 'Muhadhiratu'l-Udaba'', Volume II page 212.

Many other eminent scholars of yours have narrated this grand 'hadith' with slight variations in words from many of the companions of the Holy Prophet, such as:

- (1) 'Umar ibn Khattab,

- (2) Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas,
- (3) Abdullah ibn Abbas,
- (4) Abdullah ibn Mas'ud,
- (5) Jabir ibn Abdullah Ansari,
- (6) Abu Huraira,
- (7) Abu Sa'id Khudri,
- (8) Jabir ibn Sumra,
- (9) Malik ibn Huwairi's,
- (10) Bara'a ibn 'Azib,
- (11) Zaid ibn Arqam,
- (12) Abu Rafi',
- (13) Abdullah ibn Ubai,
- (14) Abu Suraiha,
- (15) Hudhaifa ibn Assad,
- (16) Anas ibn Malik,
- (17) Abu Huraira Aslami,
- (18) Abu Ayyub Ansari,
- (19) Sa'id ibn Musayyab,
- (20) Habib ibn Abi Thabit,
- (21) Sharhbil ibn Sa'd,
- (22) Umm Salma (wife of the Holy Prophet),
- (23) Asma bint Umais (wife of Abu Bakr),
- (24) Aqil ibn Abi Talib,
- (25) Mu'awiya ibn Abu Sufyan, and a host of other companions. In short, all of them have related with slight variation of words that the Holy Prophet (S) said: "O 'Ali, you are to me as Aaron was to Moses, except that there will be no prophet after me."

Are all these great ulama' - and there are many I have not mentioned - not sufficient to prove that this hadith has been unanimously accepted as true? Would you now confirm that you were under a misunderstanding?

Since you assume an attitude of doubt in regard to the veracity of this hadith, you should

consult Kifayatu't-Talib fi Manaqib al-'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, chapter 7, compiled by Muhammad ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i, who is one of the most prominent ulama' of your sect. After quoting six hadith in praise of 'Ali, this author comments (page 149) on this hadith as follows:

"This is a hadith whose authenticity has been acknowledged by all. It has been narrated by the most learned Imams and Huffaz (those who know the Qur'an by heart), like Abu Abdullah Bukhari in his Sahih, Muslim ibn Hujjaj in his Sahih, Abu Dawud in his Sunan, Abu Isa Tirmidhi in his Jami', Abu Abdu'r-Rahman in his Sunan, Ibn Maja Qazwini in his Sunan. All of them have unanimously acknowledged its authenticity. Hakim Nishapuri has said that this hadith has entered the stage of continuity."

I'm sure that I needn't present further evidence to show that this hadith is genuine.

Hafiz: I am not an irreligious man, so I will not reject your sensible reasoning, but I draw your attention to the statement of the great scholar and theologian, Abu'l-Hasan Amadi, who has rejected this hadith.

Well-Wisher: I wonder why a learned man like you, after hearing the views of your own distinguished ulama', would give any credence to the statement of a wicked man, who did not even perform the ritual prayers.

Sheikh: Man is free to express his faith. If someone expresses his views, we should not slander him. It is unbecoming of you to malign him instead of giving a logical reply to his remarks.

Well-Wisher: You misunderstood me. I do not unjustly censure anyone. I was not alive during the time of Amadi. Your own ulama' have reported that he was an irreligious man.

Sheikh: Where have our ulama' said that he was irreligious man?

Amadi unreliable as narrator of hadith

Well-Wisher: Ibn Hajar Asqalani has written in 'Lisanu'l-Mizan': "Saif Amadi Mutakallim 'Ali Ibn Abi 'Ali, the author, was banished from Damascus because of his irreligious views, and it is true that he did not offer prayers."

And Dhahabi, who is also one of your prominent ulama', reported the same thing in his 'Mizanu'l-I'tidal'. He said that Amadi was an innovator. If Amadi had not been a wicked and irreligious innovator, he would not have made slanderous remarks about all the companions of the Holy Prophet, including your own Caliph, 'Umar Ibn Khattab (one of the reporters of the hadith).

It's not quite fair that you fault the Shi'as for not accepting hadith recorded in Siha. If a hadith comes from authentic sources, it is acceptable even if it is in the Siha. But if an established hadith, which is recorded by Bukhari, Muslim, and other authors of Siha, is rejected by Amadi, you find no fault with that.

If you wish to know the complete arguments regarding the authenticity and sources of this hadith from the recordings of your own ulama', and if you are prepared to condemn people like Amadi, you may consult the volumes of 'Abaqatu'l-Anwar', written by the great scholar and commentator, Allama Mir Sayyid Hamid Husain Dihlawi.

In particular, you should consider the hadith of Manzila so that you may know how this great Shi'as Allama has collected sources from your own legal scholars and established the hadith's reliability.

Hafiz: You said that one of the reporters of this hadith was 'Umar Ibn Khattab. I'd like to know more about that.

Confirmation of hadith of manzila by 'Umar ibn Khattab

Well-Wisher: Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Ja'afaru'l-Mutiri and Abu'l-Laith Nasr Ibn Muhammad Samarqandi Hanafi, in their books, 'Majalis', Muhammad Ibn Abdu'r-Rahman Dhahabi in his 'Riadhun-Nazara', Mulla 'Ali Muttaqi in his 'Kanzu'l-Ummal', and others have reported from Ibn Abbas as saying that one day 'Umar Ibn Khattab said: "Leave the name of 'Ali (that is, do not speak so much ill of 'Ali) because I have heard the Holy Prophet saying that 'Ali had three qualities. If I had any one of these qualities, I would have treasured it more than anything on which the sun shines.

Once I, Abu Bakr, Abu Ubaida, Jarra and some other companions were present, and the Holy Prophet was resting against 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib. He patted 'Ali's shoulders and said, 'Ali! So far as faith is concerned, you are the first of all the believers and so far as Islam is concerned, you have taken the lead.' Then he said, 'Ali! You are to me as Aaron was to Moses. And he is a liar who thinks he is my friend if he is your enemy.'"

Is it permissible in your belief to reject the statement of Caliph 'Umar? If it is not permissible, why do you pay attention to the absurd statements of a man like Amadi?

The position of single narration in the Sunni sect

I have yet to reply to one of your remarks. You said that this hadith is a single narration, and hence it is not acceptable. If we say such a thing according to the pattern of the men which we have in view, we would be justified.

But it surprises me to hear such a thing from you because in your sect even a single narration is sufficient to establish the truth of a matter. If someone refuses to admit the authenticity of a single narration, he is, according to your ulama', an unbeliever.

Maliku'l-Ulama' Shahabu'd-Din Daulatabadi said in 'Hidayatu's-Sa'da': "If someone refuses to accept a lone report or conjecture and says that it is not acceptable, he is an infidel. If he says that this single narration is not correct, and this conjecture is not proved, he is a sinner, not an infidel."

Hafiz: We have drifted from our main topic. Please let us know how you can prove through this hadith of Manzila that 'Ali occupied the rank of a prophet.

Characteristics of 'Ali

Well-Wisher: This hadith proves that 'Ali (a.s.) possessed three characteristics:

(1) The rank of a prophet;

(2) The rank of successor to the Holy Prophet; and

(3) his superior position among all the companions of the Holy Prophet.

Like the Holy Prophet, 'Ali's followers likened him to Aaron, who was a prophet, was invested with the caliphate of Moses, and was superior to all the Bani Isra'il.

Nawab: Was Aaron (a.s.) a prophet?

Well-Wisher: Yes.

Nawab: Can you cite a verse from the Holy Qur'an in support of this point?

Well-Wisher: Allah mentioned his prophethood in many verses. He says:

"Surely We have revealed to you as We revealed to Noah, and to the prophets after him. We revealed to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, and Jacob and the tribes, and to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon; and We gave to David Psalms." (4:163)

And again He says:

"And mention Moses in the Book; surely he was one purified, and he was an apostle, a prophet. And We called to him from the blessed side of the mountain, and We made him draw nigh, holding communion (with us). And We gave to him out of Our Mercy his brother, Aaron, a prophet." (19:51-53)

Hafiz: So, according to your reasoning, Muhammad (S) and 'Ali (a.s.) were both prophets.

Well-Wisher: I didn't express it the way you have. Of course, you yourself know that there is a great difference of opinion regarding how many prophets there have been. Some claim that there have been 120,000, or, even more.

But, all of them in their respective periods were divided into groups, and were subordinate to a major prophet to whom a sacred book was revealed containing a new religious law. Five of them were major prophets: Noah (a.s.), Abraham (a.s.), Moses (a.s.), Jesus (a.s.), and the last of the prophets, Muhammad (S), whose rank is the highest.

Aaron (a.s.) was one of those prophets who was not permanent, or, independent. He was subordinate to the 'shari'a' (religious code) of his brother, Moses. 'Ali (a.s.) reached the rank of prophethood but was not elevated to the rank of prophet per se since he was subordinate to the 'shari'a' of Muhammad.

In this 'hadith' of 'Manzila', the purpose of the prophet was to tell people that, just as Aaron (a.s.) had reached the rank of prophethood but was subordinate to Moses, 'Ali (a.s.) reached the rank of prophethood. The Imamate was conferred upon him, but he was subordinate to Muhammad (S).

Significance of 'Ali's rank

In his commentary on the Nahju'l-Balagha, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid says in connection with this hadith that by mentioning the rank of Aaron in comparison to Moses, the Prophet indicated that 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib occupied that rank. Similarly, Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i, in his 'Matalibu's-Su'ul', page 19, after explaining the rank and position of Aaron, says:

"The gist of the matter is that the position of Aaron in relation to Moses was that Aaron was his brother, his representative, partner in prophethood, and his successor or vicegerent when Moses was on a journey.

The Prophet of Allah has also in this hadith indicated that 'Ali held the same position as Aaron held, except prophethood, which has been excluded by his saying: 'There will be no prophet after me.'"

Therefore, it is proven that 'Ali was the Prophet's brother, wazir (assistant), representative, and his successor, as declared by the Prophet in his journey to Tabuk. This hadith is unanimously accepted as true. The same view has been expressed by Ibn Sabbagh Maliki in his 'Fusulu'l-Muhimma', page 29, and by many others of your prominent ulama'.

Hafiz: I think your claim that if our Prophet had not been the seal of the prophets, 'Ali would have held that office, is peculiar to you alone. No one else has said this.

Well-Wisher: This claim is not confined to me and the Shi'as ulama'. Your own ulama' have held the same view. One of your great ulama' is Mulla 'Ali Ibn Sultan Muhammad Harawi Qari. In his 'Mirqat al-Sharh bar Mishkat', he says, commenting on the hadith of Manzila, "There is an indication in this hadith that if there were any prophet of Allah after the last of the prophets, it would have been 'Ali." Another of your prominent ulama' who has interpreted this hadith the same way is the well known scholar, Jalalu'd-Din Suyuti.

He writes towards the end of his Baghiatu'l-Wu'az Fi Tabaqatu'l-Huffaz, giving the chain of chroniclers up to Jabir Abdullah Ansari, that the Holy Prophet told the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali "Had there been any prophet of Allah after me, it would have been you!"

In addition, Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani Faqih Shafi'i says in the second of the six Mawadda in his book 'Mawaddatu'l-Qurba', quoting a narration from Anas Ibn Malik, that the Prophet said: "Verily, Allah made me superior to all the prophets, chose me for excellence, and made for me a successor, my cousin, 'Ali.

Through him, He strengthened my shoulders, just as the shoulders of Moses were strengthened by Aaron. He, ('Ali) is my vicegerent and assistant. If there were any prophet after me, it would have been 'Ali, but there will be no prophet after me."

So you see that I am not alone in claiming the rank of prophethood for 'Ali. The Prophet and your own ulama' have acknowledged it. Since he possessed the rank of Aaron, and since the era of prophethood had ended, 'Ali was the fittest person for the caliphate (vicegerency). One indication of 'Ali's exalted rank was that the Prophet permitted the door of 'Ali's house to remain open toward the mosque.

These comments caused excitement and confusion among the Sunnis. Well-Wisher asked why it was so.

Nawab: Last Friday we went to the mosque to offer prayers. Hafiz Sahib told us about the superiority of Caliph Abu Bakr. He said that he was permitted to keep the door of his house opened towards the mosque. We are surprised to hear you say that this permission was peculiar to 'Ali. Please clarify this point.

Well-Wisher: (Turning to Hafiz Sahib) Have you made this statement?

Hafiz: Yes. It is recorded in our authentic hadith, as reported by the pious and just

companion of the Holy Prophet, Abu Huraira. The Prophet ordered "That all doors opening towards the mosque be closed except the door of Abu Bakr's house, for Abu Bakr is from me and I am from Abu Bakr."

Well-Wisher: Surely you know that because of the merit of the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, the Bani Umayya made continued efforts through secret means and particularly through the servile flatterers of Mu'awiya, like Abu Huraira and Mughira, to fabricate such hadith.

Moreover, the followers of Abu Bakr, because of their support of him, strengthened these fabricated hadith. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, in his commentary on Nahju'l-Balagha, Volume I, and again in Volume 3, page 17, discusses in detail that among the many fabricated hadith is the one which tells about the closing of the doors of all the houses towards the mosque, except that of Abu Bakr.

Contrary to this forged hadith, there are many authentic hadith, which are recorded not only in authentic Shi'as books, but also in reliable books of your own ulama', like Sahih.

Nawab: Since it is a controversial issue, with Hafiz Sahib saying it is peculiar to Abu Bakr, and with you saying it is peculiar to 'Ali, we would appreciate it if you would quote from our books so that we may compare your references with those of Hafiz Sahib.

Hadith that by order of the Prophet the doors of houses facing the mosque were closed except the door of 'Ali's house

Well-Wisher: The following sources have narrated that the Prophet ordered that all the doors of the houses opening toward the mosque be closed except the door of 'Ali's house: Ahmad ibn Hanbal in 'Musnad', Volume I, page 175, Volume II, page 26 and Volume IV, page 369; Imam Abu Abdu'r-Rahman Nisa'i in 'Sunan' and in 'Khasa'isi'l-Alawi', pages 13-14; Hakim Nishapuri in 'Mustadrak', Volume III, pages 117-125 and Sibte Ibn Jauzi in 'Tadhkira', pages 24-25 have testified to the reliability of this 'hadith' on the basis of chains of narrators of Tirmidhi and Ahmad.

Again, Ibn Athir Jazri in 'Athna'l-Matalib', page 12, Ibn Hajar Makki in 'Sawa'iq Muhriqa', page 76, Ibn Hajar Asqalani in 'Fathu'l-Bari', Volume VII, page 12, Tibrani in 'Ausat', Khatib Baghdadi in his 'Ta'rikh' (History), Volume VII, page, 205, ibn Kathir in 'Ta'rikh', Volume 7, page 342, Muttaqi Hindi in 'Kanzu'l-Ummal', Volume VI, page 408, Haithami in 'Majma'u'z-Zawa'id', Volume IX;, page 65, Muhibu'd-Din Tabari in 'Riyadh', Volume II, page 451, Hafiz Abu Nu'aim in 'Faza'ilu's-Sahaba' and in 'Hilyatu'l-Auliya', Volume IV, page 183, Jalalu'd-Din Suyuti in 'Ta'rikhu'l-Khulafa', page 116, in 'Jamu'l-Jawami'', in 'Khasa'isu'l-Kubra'.

And in 'La'aliu'l-Masnu'a', Volume I, page 181, Khatib Khawarizmi in 'Manaqib', Hamwaini in 'Fara'id', Ibn Maghazili in 'Manaqib', Munawi Misri in 'Kunuzu'd-Daqa'iq', Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in 'Yanabiu'l-Mawadda', page 87, devoting the whole of Chapter 17 to this very issue, Shahabu'd-Din Qastalani in 'Irshad al-Bari', Volume VI, page 81, Halabi in 'Siratu'l-Halabiyya', Volume III, page 374 and Muhammad ibn Talha Shafi'i in 'Matalibu's-Su'ul', and many others, particularly from among the prominent companions of the Holy Prophet (S), have narrated the same thing.

For instance, Caliph 'Umar Ibn Khattab, Abdullah Ibn Abbas, Abdullah Ibn 'Umar, Zaid Ibn

Arqam, and Jabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari have confirmed the reliability of this hadith. Some of your prominent ulama', in order to save the people from being misled by the Bani Umayya, have emphasized the truth of this hadith. Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i, in his book 'Kifayatu't-Talib', chapter 50, has dealt with this hadith under a special heading.

Quoting from authentic sources, he says that since a number of doors of the companions of the Prophet opened towards the mosque, and since the Prophet had forbidden everyone to enter the mosque in the state of janaba or haiz (pollution making the ritual bath essential), he ordered that all doors of the houses be closed excepting the door of Hazrat 'Ali's house.

He said, "Close all the doors; but let the door of 'Ali's house remain open." Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Shafi'i says that it is peculiar to 'Ali that he was permitted to enter and stay in the mosque in the state of janaba.

He goes on to say: "In short, the Holy Prophet's conferring this privilege exclusively on 'Ali was a great honor. It shows that the Prophet knew that 'Ali, Fatima, and their descendants were entirely free from impurity, as is clearly shown by the 'verse of purity' in the Holy Qur'an."

These remarks of a Shafi'i scholar may be compared to the hadith mentioned by Hafiz Sahib. Leaving aside all the authentic sources we have quoted, if you have any proof of Abu Bakr's purity, please present it.

The fact is that even Bukhari and Muslim in their collections of traditions have pointed out this fact that a polluted person cannot stay in the mosque. The Prophet said, "It is not permitted for anyone who is polluted to stay in the mosque except for me and 'Ali."

Perhaps I may be allowed here to quote a hadith from the second Caliph, 'Umar Ibn Khattab, which has been reported by Hakim in Mustadrak, page 125, by Sulayman Balkhi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda chapter 56, page 210, and by others, like Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Khatib Khawarizmi, Ibn Hajar, Suyuti, and Ibn Athir Jazri.

He said: "Verily, 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib possessed three outstanding merits. If I possessed any one of them, it would have been better for me than red-haired animals (camels): (1) The Prophet gave his daughter in marriage to him; (2) The Prophet ordered that all the doors of the houses opening towards the mosque be closed except the door of 'Ali's house; (3) The Prophet bestowed upon him the flag (of Islam) on the day of the Battle of Khaibar."

From these remarks, it is now clear that 'Ali was similar to the Holy Prophet in all respects, just as Aaron was to Moses.

So when Moses found Aaron fittest for this office, he asked Allah to make him his associate in his mission, so that he might be his wazir (minister or assistant). Similarly, when the Holy Prophet saw that there was no one among all of his followers as deserving as 'Ali, he asked Allah Almighty to make 'Ali his minister and associate.

Nawab: Are there further hadith regarding this issue?

Well-Wisher: Yes, many exist concerning this matter in your own books.

Nawab: I am prepared to listen to them provided you, too, (pointing toward the ulama' of the other side) would like to listen.

Hafiz: No harm. Listening to hadith is as devotional a deed as the narration thereof.

While bowing in ritual prayer, 'Ali gave a ring to a beggar

Well-Wisher: Ibn Maghazili Faqih Shafi'i in his 'Manaqib', Jalalu'd-Din Suyuti in 'Durr al-Mansur', the renowned theologian, Ahmad Tha'labi, in 'Kashfu'l-Bayan', Sibt Ibn Jauzi in 'Tadhkiratu'l-Khawasu'l-Umma', in connection with the verse of 'Wilaya' quotes from Abu Dharr Ghifari and Asma Bint Umais (wife of Abu Bakr) that they said that one day they offered their noon prayers in the mosque when the Prophet was present. A beggar began asking for alms. No one gave him anything. 'Ali was bowing (in the ritual bow). When he pointed to his finger, the beggar removed the ring from his finger.

The Holy Prophet saw what happened and raising his head towards the sky, said "O Allah, my brother Moses prayed to you: 'O my Lord, expand for me my breast and make easy for me my task. Appoint for me a helper from my family, Aaron, my brother.'"

The verse was revealed telling Moses that his prayer was granted. Allah appointed for him a helper and strengthened his hands and gave them such power and authority that no one could overpower them.

"...and Moses said to his brother Aaron: 'Take my place among my people, and act well and do not follow the way of the mischief-makers.'" (7:142)

Aaron's position as Prophet as well as caliph

Hafiz: You said that Aaron was an associate of Moses in prophethood. How was he then made his caliph? An associate in prophethood holds a position superior to that of a caliph or successor. If the partner is a prophet and he is made the caliph, this is a lowering of his rank.

Well-Wisher: The principal prophethood belonged to Moses, and Aaron's prophethood was subordinate to that of Moses. But regarding preaching he was his associate, as is evident from Moses' requests, recorded in the Holy Qur'an:

"He (Moses) said: 'O my Lord! Expand my breast for me, and make my affair easy for me, and loose the knot from my tongue, (that) they may understand my family; Aaron, my brother, strengthen my back by him, and associate him (with me) in my affair.'" (20:25-32)

Similarly, 'Ali was one who, besides possessing the rank of a prophet, was an associate of the Prophet in all stages, and special qualities.

Hafiz: I am astonished to hear you exaggerating the position of 'Ali. We are all amazed. You just said that 'Ali possessed all the characteristics of the Prophet.

Well-Wisher: These statements are not exaggerations. They are facts. The Prophet's successor should, according to common sense, be the model of the Prophet. Even your own great ulama' have expressed similar beliefs. Imam Tha'labi, in his commentary, confirmed this point.

And the great Sunni scholar, Alim Fazil Sayyid Ahmad Shahabu'd-Din, in his 'Tauzihu'd-Dala'il', has referred to this point as follows: "It is not a secret that the Commander of the Faithful resembled the Prophet of Allah in most good qualities, selfless actions, habits, prayers to Allah, and all other exalted ways of life.

This has been proved by authentic reports and reliable sources and does not require any proof or argument. Some ulama' have counted some of those qualities which 'Ali and the Holy Prophet possessed equally."

Among the qualities shared by both is their lineal descent. And arguing from the verse of purity, we see that 'Ali is similar to the Holy Prophet in purity. (This verse was revealed in reference to five people: Muhammad, 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husain.) 'Ali, like the Prophet, was the Vicegerent of Allah. According to both sects, the following verse was revealed in reference to 'Ali:

"Only Allah is your Friend and His Apostle and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay the poor-rate while they bow." (5:55)

'Ali was similar to the Holy Prophet in the performance of the duties of prophethood and preaching, as the affair of the Sura of Immunity (Bara'a) shows. The Prophet gave certain verses of the Sura to Abu Bakr and instructed him to recite them to the people during the Hajj.

The angel Gabriel soon appeared before the Prophet and told him that it was Allah's will that the matter of the Holy Qur'an should be conveyed either by the Prophet himself, or by one who was of him. 'Ali was identical with the Prophet in his role as Vicegerent of Allah.

The Prophet himself said: "I have been commanded by Allah to announce this to you." Then he grasped the hand of 'Ali and said, "Know you all, of whomsoever I am the Maula (Master), 'Ali is also his Maula (Master)." Moreover, the self of 'Ali is declared to be the self of the Prophet. The 'Verse of Imprecation' (Mubahala) says:

"But whoever disputes with you in this matter after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: 'Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our selves and your selves; then let us be earnest in prayer and pray for the curse of Allah on the liars.'" (3:61)

To return to the time in the mosque when 'Ali gave the beggar his ring and the Prophet invoked Allah, asking Him to make 'Ali his associate in his prophethood. Then the Holy Prophet prayed: "O Allah! I am Muhammad, Your chosen one and Your Prophet. Expand for me my breast. And make easy for me my task and appoint for me a helper from my family, 'Ali. Strengthen my back through him."

Abu Dharr related, "By Allah! The prayer of the Prophet had not ended when the angel Gabriel appeared and revealed this verse to him:

'Only Allah is your Friend and His Apostle and those who believe, those who maintain prayers and pay the poor-rate while they bow.'" (5:55)

The Prophet's prayer was granted, and 'Ali was appointed his vizier. Muhammad ibn Talha Shafi'i, in Matalibu's-Su'ul, page 19, has dealt with this issue in detail. Furthermore, Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Isfahani in 'Manaqatu'l-Mutaharin', Sheikh 'Ali Ja'fari in Kanzu'l-Barahin, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal in 'Musnad', Sayyid Shahabu'd-din in Tauzihu'd-Dala'il, Jalalu'd-Din

Suyuti in 'Durr al-Mansur', and other prominent scholars of your sect have narrated this in their works. Some of them have narrated from Asma Bint Umais (the wife of Abu Bakr) and some from other companions.

The following was narrated by Abdullah ibn Abbas: "The Prophet took me and 'Ali by the hand. He offered four rak'ats of prayer, and raising his hands toward the sky, said, 'O Allah! Moses, son of Imran, begged of you to appoint for him a helper and to make easy for him his task. I am Muhammad. I beg of you to expand for me my breast and make easy for me my task. Keep my tongue fluent so that the people may understand my speech. Appoint for me a helper from my family, 'Ali. Strengthen my back through him, and associate him with me in my affair.'

I heard a voice saying, 'O Ahmad! I have granted your request.' Then the Prophet took 'Ali by the hand and said, 'Raise your hands towards the sky and pray to Allah so that He may bestow something upon you.' Then 'Ali raised his hands and said, 'O Allah, promise me on Your part that you will hold me in Your affection.' Immediately the angel Gabriel appeared and brought this verse of the chapter 'Mary':

'Surely (as for) those who believe and do good deeds upon them will Allah bestow love.' (19:96)

When the companions of the Prophet were surprised at this, the Prophet said, 'Why are you astonished? The Holy Qur'an has four parts: One-fourth concerns us (the Ahlul Bayt); one-fourth concerns lawful matters; one-fourth is for unlawful matters; and one-fourth concerns commandments and ordinances. I swear by Allah that there are many verses in the Holy Qur'an which have been revealed in praise of 'Ali.'"

Sheikh: Even if this hadith is taken to be authentic, it does not indicate a special rank for 'Ali. The same hadith has been narrated concerning Caliph Abu Bakr and Caliph 'Umar. Qaz'a Ibn Suwaid has narrated from Ibn Abi Malika who quotes Ibn Abbas as saying that the Holy Prophet said, "Abu Bakr and 'Umar are to me as Aaron was to Moses."

Well-Wisher: You should take into account the character of some of your narrators. Sometimes you argue from the reports of Amadi and sometimes from those of the notorious liar and forger, Qaz'a Ibn Suwaid, even though your own leading ulama' have discredited him. Allama Dhahabi, in his 'Mizanu'l-I'tidal', in the description of the affairs of Qaz'a Ibn Suwaid, and Ammar Ibn Harun, rejects this hadith and says simply, "It is a lie."

When your own ulama' reject Qaz'a, the hadith that he narrates should be rejected. Compare this hadith of Qaz'a with the chain of hadith that I have quoted from the most prominent ulama' of your sect and decide yourself which of the hadith you accept.

Fifth Session, Tuesday night, 27th Rajab 1345 A.H.

Hafiz: From your eloquent talk last night, I conclude that you wanted to prove that 'Ali was the immediate successor of the Prophet, though in fact this hadith has only a specific significance. It was narrated during the journey of Tabuk. There is no proof that it has