

Finality of Prophethood

Before we deal with the above title let us first define what is meant by a prophet. The New Lexicon W.E.D. of English defines a prophet as a person who, by divine inspiration, declares to the world the divine will, judgments etc. According to the three divine religions i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam, a prophet is a sincere human being who quotes God Almighty. He is entrusted with a message from God (thus he acquires the title "messenger"). He follows what he teaches and always asserts that he speaks not from himself but from God. He does not look for any worldly or material reward for his mission. To prove his claim he is supported with miracles from God.

Based on this definition a prophet is not a liar, but an honest conveyer of a message from God. He does not seek any worldly gains or prestige. He is rather ready to suffer for his message and does not waiver nor change it at all costs.

There were many prophets over the ages sent by God to their peoples. Among these are Adam, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Junah, Lot, Hud, David, Solomon, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. The Quran, the Holy Book for Muslims,

mentions 25 messengers or prophets of God by name.

Having said this can we accept today the rise of a new prophet of God? Why not if this applied to certain individuals in the past? And why at all should Muslims insist that Muhammad is the last and final messenger and prophet of God?

To begin with all prophets of God conveyed one and the same message to their people, namely to worship God alone who created them for this purpose, who provides for them and unto whom they will return one day. He gave them life and will take it one day. Whenever people deviated from the path of God shown to them by an earlier messenger, God would send a new one to reassert the mission of the previous messenger and to restore the original message. Thus the series extended until prophet Muhammad concluded it as the last messenger.

But why is Muhammad the last and final messenger of God, why can't we accept prophets or messengers of God as we accepted them before? One reason is that his message is for all the worlds. It is not limited for one generation or one people at a certain time or place. He is rather the messenger of God to all times and climes. While other messengers were sent to one particular people, and were supported with physical, material miracles to prove their authenticity, Muhammad whose message is universal, received a universal miracle

that is not affected by the change of time or place. This message is the Holy Quran.

A word is pertinent here about the Holy Quran. This book is "Holy" or sacred because it is the word of God revealed in letter and spirit to Prophet Muhammad over a period of 23 years.

Unlike other scriptures, it was revealed piece meal and Muhammad was only the vehicle that conveyed the message honestly and accurately. So, if the Quran is the book of God that was not changed, why then should there be any new message or messenger for that matter?

Let us come closer. Islam states clearly and decisively that Muhammad p.b.u.h was the last and final messenger. In one Quranic verse he is described as the seal and the stamp of all prophets. In chapter 33 verse 40 we read: Muhammad was not the father of any of your men but the messenger of God and the seal of all prophets. "Seal" in Arabic, the original language of the Quran, means the final, the last and the stamp of prophets. When any thing is sealed this means that it is closed and concluded. That is the case with Muhammad p.b.u.h.

On the other hand we have a number of statements by prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. warning against any future prophet.

In one of them he said: There will be no prophet hood after me. In another tradition he asserted: Nothing of prophet hood remains after me except

righteous vision. In a third saying Prophet Muhammad said: I have names: I am Muhammad, I am Ahmad, I am the eliminator at whose hands God will eliminate unbelief, I am the gatherer on whose footsteps people will be gathered (for the Day of judgement) and I am the last one as there will be no prophet after me.

Here are more sayings of the Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. to this effect. In Musnad Imam Ahmad, one of the reliable sources of prophetic traditions, Anas ibn Malik reported the Messenger of God to have said: Apostleship and prophethood have been concluded. So there will be neither apostle nor prophet after me" Hearing this the people around the Prophet felt very bad, thus he said: but there will only remain glad tidings. They said: What are glad tidings? He answered: the vision granted to some pious Muslim individuals. It is in fact one part of prophethood.

In the same source, namely Musnad Imam Ahmed, Al Irbad ibn Saryah quoted the Prophet to have said: I have been the seal and the final prophet while Adam was still in his mud stage.

In Sahih Muslim, another authentic source of the Prophet's traditions, Jaber reported the Messenger of God p.b.u.h. to have said : The parable of me and the prophets is like a man who built a house which he perfected and completed except a spot of one brick. Thus people started to enter it and express their

surprise from it saying: Had it not been for the absence of this brick. I am the missed brick. I came and thus I concluded the prophets.

The same tradition was also reported by the famous reporter Abu Huraira.

To come now to the decisive Quranic statements that declare that " The only religion with God is Islam "(19-3) and whoever seeks any religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him, and he will be a loser on the Day of Judgment (85-3).

In other words those who claim to be prophets after Prophet Muhammad are trying to change his religion and thus introduce a new one. The Prophet himself warned his followers against false prophets. In one tradition we read: on the authority of Abu Huraira the Prophet said: The Hour (the Day of Judgement) will not take place until almost thirty false prophets (lairs) will appear. Every one of them would claim to be the Messenger of God. In another variation he added: So beware of them. As a matter of fact to be a Muslim the first pillar is to testify that God is one and only and that Muhammad is his messenger. Thus one automatically puts himself out of the fold of Islam if he claims or accepts any new prophet after Muhammad p.b.u.h. May God guide all people to the straight Path of Islam, the path of Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. Amen.

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