

Abu Bakr's Caliphate

Imam Ali Ibn Abi al `Izz al Hanafi

The Islamic Creed

Abridged by Abdul Mun`im Saleh Al `Ali Al `Izzi

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We affirm that the caliphate after the Prophet was, first and foremost, deserving of Abu Bakr, believing in his superiority and seniority over the rest of the Ummah.

This is our opinion. However, the *Ummah* disagreed over the nature of Abu Bakr's succession. Was it by the Prophet's command, or was it simply a choice? Hasan al-Basri and a group of people from the *Ahl al-Hadith* believe it was by dint of command, although subtle and indirect, coming from the Prophet (saws). Some of them in fact have said that it is proven by the texts. However, some others of the *Ahl al-Hadith*, the Mu'tazilah and Ash'ariyyah have said that it was established by choice and consent.

As a matter of fact, we have some reports that suggest that the caliphate of Abu Bakr was by the dint of a command from the Prophet (saws). One of them is in Bukhari, narrated by Jubayr b. Mut'im who said: "A woman came up to the Prophet (saws). He told her to come back to him later. She asked, 'What if I came and didn't find you?' (She meant, if he was dead). He replied, 'If you didn't find me, go to Abu Bakr.'" There are other reports supporting this one which can be said to be the text in support of his succession.

Then there is the *hadith* of Hudhayfah b. al-Yaman who reports that the Prophet (saws) said: "Follow the two that will come after me: Abu Bakr and 'Umar." The traditionalists have preserved this report.

The *Sahihayn* also have reports narrated by 'A'isha about her father. She says: "The day the Messenger of Allah took ill, he entered into my house and said, 'Call in your father and brother so that I write down in favor of Abu Bakr, for Allah and the Muslims will not accept anyone but Abu Bakr.'"

Reports about the Prophet preferring Abu Bakr over others are well known. In one of them he said: "Ask Abu Bakr to lead in the Prayers."

Trustworthy compilations also have another report recording the Prophet as having said from his pulpit: "Were I to take someone a Friend from among the people of the earth, I would have taken Abu Bakr as the Friend. Let there not be a door opening into the (Grand) mosque. Close them all, except for Abu Bakr's door."

As for those who held the view that the Prophet did not appoint Abu Bakr as his caliph, not at least through a proven *hadith*, they have argued with the report of Ibn 'Umar who reported 'Umar ibn al-Khattab as saying: "If I nominate a successor after me, then one who was better than me, that is, Abu Bakr, nominated a successor after him. But if I don't nominate, then one who was better than me, that is, the Prophet (saws), did not name a successor after himself." 'Abdullah Ibn

'Umar adds: "When he mentioned the Prophet, I knew that he was not going to nominate his own successor."

What seems likely, although Allah knows best, is that the Prophet (saws) did not issue a written edict to the effect that Abu Bakr would be the caliph after him. He did intend to do that, but changed his mind, saying, "Allah and the Muslims will accept none but Abu Bakr." This indeed was a stronger manner of appointing him his successor, the Prophet (saws) let know the believers his own preference of Abu Bakr as his successor, and led them to accepting his preference through his various words and deeds. He also spoke of his appointment in favorable terms, expressing his own satisfaction. Were his hints insufficient to announce where his choice lay, he would have spoken out more explicitly, leaving no room for excuses and doubts...

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