

## THE AHMADIYA MOVEMENT

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THE Ahmadiya sect was founded by Mírzá Ghulam Aḥmad, chief of the village of Qádian in the Gurdaspur district, Panjab. His disciples are called by three names : Ahmadis, from the name Ahmad, Ahmadiya being the official designation of the sect ; Mirzais, from the title of their master ; and Qádianis, from the name of the centre of the movement.

The family of Mírzá Ghulam Aḥmad is of Mughul descent, and came into India from Samarkand, Turkestan, in the reign of Babar, the founder of the Mughul dynasty. The father and cousin of the Mírzá Sahib were loyal to the British Government during the mutiny of 1857, and he himself professed the same attitude. The father was a Yunani physician, the son claimed to be expert in medicine, as is proved by his pamphlets on plague, "Marham-i-'Isá," etc., and the successor of the Mírzá Sahib as head of the sect is a third in the medical succession, Hakim Nur-ud-Din. The spirit of religious syncretism seems to run in the family. Mírzá Imam-ud-Din, a first cousin of the Mírzá Sahib, while remaining a Mohammedan, posed as the *guru* or religious guide of the sweeper community in the Panjab. He claimed to be a sort of successor to Lal Bag, the traditional religious guide of the sweepers, and to have the mission of teaching them morality ; and to this end he prescribed the Ten Commandments with certain editorial changes. But the claims of his cousin, Mírzá Ghulam Aḥmad, were far more pretentious. He professed to have come in the "spirit and power" of Jesus Christ, and so to be "the promised Messiah" ; in the spirit and power of Mohammed, and so to be the promised Ahmad ; and in the spirit and power of Krishna, and so to be the promised future incarnation expected by the Hindus. Thus in one of his last conspicuous utterances the Mírzá Ghulam Aḥmad said : "My advent in this age is not meant for the reformation of the Mohammedans only, but Almighty

God has willed to bring about through me a regeneration of three great nations, viz. : Hindus, Mohammedans and Christians. As for the last two I am the promised Messiah, so for the first I have been sent as an Avatar." (*Review of Religions*, November, 1904, p. 410). Thus the claim is made to a universal mission.

The Mirzá of Qádian claimed that the promised Mahdí and the promised Messiah expected by Mohammedans are not two persons but one, and that he was that person. In opposition to the orthodox doctrine of a bloody Mahdi and the correlative doctrine of a bloody *jihád*, the Mirzá Qádiani declared that "the traditions speaking of such a person (as the bloody Mahdi) are all of them forged"; that the true Mahdi (the Guided One) is to be a man of peace, not a man of blood; and that he, the Mirzá of Qádian, is at once the promised Mahdi and the promised Messiah, as it were a "Mahdi-Messiah." The fusion of the two conceptions of the Mahdi and of the Messiah requires that the Mahdi be clothed upon with the peaceful character of the Messiah, and this is the theory which underlies the Mirzá Qádiani's polemic against the doctrine of a bloody Mahdi and a bloody *jihád*.

But the supreme claim of the Mirzá of Qádian is that he is the promised Messiah. As such he signed himself in his numerous writings. What did he mean by this claim? He did not mean that he was the very person of Jesus Christ re-incarnated in India. On the contrary his conception was that, just as according to the interpretation of Jesus, John the Baptist was the Elijah which was to come (Matthew xi. 14), because he came "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke i. 17), so he, the Mirzá, is the Messiah which is to come, because he is come in the "spirit and power" of Christ. But note the logical consequences of this claim. If the Mirzá Qádiani is the personal Messiah, then his appearance is the fulfilment of all the Bible promises which speak of Christ's second coming; no literal coming again of the "same" Jesus of Nazareth is to be expected; and the expectation of a literal second coming of Christ on the part of Christ is based on misinterpretation.

As clearing the way for the doctrine of his own

Messiahship, the Mirzá Qádiani held that Jesus Christ did not die on the Cross, but, on the contrary, that He came to India in order to preach to the descendants of the ten lost tribes in Afghanistan and Kashmir, and died a natural death in Kashmir, where His tomb exists unto this day. His grounds for the first conclusion, viz. that Jesus did not die on the Cross, are as follows: (1) Jesus remained on the Cross only for a few hours and His legs were not broken. Hence the probability is that when He was taken down from the Cross He was not really dead, but only unconscious through loss of blood. This conclusion is confirmed by the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus to His disciples, which were those of the body of a living man and not of a disembodied spirit, since He ate and drank with His disciples and allowed them to touch Him. A revival of the "swoon theory" of the resurrection.

(2) The recovery of Jesus from His wounds took place through the Marham-i-'Isá or "ointment of Jesus," which, according to the Mirzá of Qádian, is mentioned in over a thousand books on medicine. The disciples of Jesus applied this wonderful ointment to His wounds with such success that within the space of forty days He was entirely healed and ready for foreign travel. The "fraud theory" of the resurrection.

(3) Jesus' interpretation of the "sign of Jonah the prophet" is regarded as a confirmation of the same view. Jesus said: "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew xii. 40). But, said the prophet of Qádian, Jonah entered the belly of the fish alive, remained there alive, and came out alive. So must Jesus have entered the tomb alive, remained there alive, and come out alive, in order to make the analogy complete.

(4) The spiritual death of Christianity is alleged in support of the same thesis, namely, that Jesus did not die on the Cross, *and so did not rise from the dead.*

The Mirzá's proofs for the second part of his thesis, viz. : that Jesus, on escaping alive from the Cross, came to India and died in Kashmir, may be summarized as

follows : (1) The account in Nicolas Notovitch's *Unknown Life of Christ* indicates that Jesus visited India. In harmony with this, the true meaning of the ascension of Jesus is declared to be His separation from His disciples in order to visit Afghanistan and Kashmir. But why should Jesus visit these regions rather than any other part of the world ? The answer is furnished by the Mírzá's theory that the people of Afghanistan and Kashmir are descendants of the ten lost tribes.

(2) As furnishing a kind of *a priori* proof that Jesus would naturally go in search of the ten lost tribes, the Mírzá Ghulam Aḥmad cites the following words of Jesus : " The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost " (Luke xix. 10) ; " And other sheep I have which are not of this fold . . . they shall hear My voice " (John x. 16).

(3) The crowning proof that Jesus visited Kashmir is found in the existence of a tomb in Srinagar, Kashmir, which the Qádiani people stoutly affirm to be the very tomb of Jesus Christ. It is the tomb of a certain *Yus Asaf*, and is situated in Khan Yar Street, Srinagar. It is asserted that the keepers of this tomb regard it as the tomb of a prince-prophet. But Mohammed was the last of the prophets. Therefore it must have been before his time. Whose tomb could it be but that of Jesus ? Besides, the first part of the name *Yus Asaf* is clearly a corruption of *Yasu* (!) or Jesus, and *Asaf* (from the Hebrew *asaf*, to gather) means gatherer. Hence, according to the Qádiani interpretation, *Yus Asaf* means Jesus the Gatherer of the lost sheep (*i.e.*, the ten lost tribes) of the House of Israel.

The conclusion, then, is that " Christ died like ordinary mortals," and the consequences which the Mírzá Sahib draws are as follows : Negatively : (a) the overthrow of the doctrine of Christ's sacrificial death, resurrection, ascension, and second coming, as accepted by Christians ; and (b) the overthrow of the belief that Christ was " taken up " to God and will come again to the help of the Mahdi, as accepted by Mohammedans. Positively : the leaving open of the way for the coming of one who will come in " the spirit and power " of Christ, yea, who

has already come in the person of the Mughul Messiah, Ghulam Ahmad of Qádian.

The negative work has thus been done, and the ground has been cleared for the constructive part of the Qádiani proof. This is developed chiefly along the line of parallelism or correspondence. (1) Correspondence between the first Adam and the second Adam. At the close of the sixth day God created the first Adam. But one day is with the Lord as a thousand years. Therefore at the close of the sixth millennium or the beginning of the seventh, the second Adam is to appear. But we are now at the beginning of the seventh millennium, if we reckon according to the lunar year; and the time is fulfilled for the second Adam to be manifested. Where will he appear? In the east and not in the west, for from Genesis ii. 8 we learn that God had put the first Adam in a garden eastward. Hence the Mírzá Ghulam Ahmad is demonstrated to be the second Adam, since both the time and place of his appearing are in strictest correspondence with the time and place of the appearing of the first Adam.

(2) Correspondence between the Children of Israel and the Children of Ishmael. These two tribes are of fundamental importance in divine revelation. The great prophets of the former were Moses and Christ. Christ was the final prophet of the Jews. The Jews' rejection of Christ involved their own rejection and the loss of their nationality. Then came the turn of Ishmael. According to Deuteronomy xviii. 18, a prophet was raised up "like unto" Moses from among the "brethren" of the Israelites in the person of the great law-giver Mohammed. Mohammed, therefore, was the Ishmaelitic prophet, as it were, the Moses of Islam. But Moses and Christ were separated by an interval of twelve or fourteen centuries. Hence, in order to preserve the parallelism, another prophet must rise twelve or fourteen centuries after Mohammed, to be, as it were, the Christ of Islam. Who can this be but Ghulam Ahmad of Qádian?

(3) Correspondence between Jesus of Nazareth and Ahmad of Qádian. (a) As regards the times marked by the advent of each: both advents are followed by a

millennium—the advent of Jesus of Nazareth by the negative millennium of the devil’s imprisonment (cf. Rev. xx.), and the advent of Aḥmad of Qáđian by the positive millennium of the Kingdom of God. (b) As regards political circumstances: just as the Jewish Messiah appeared in Palestine when it was subject to the Roman Government, so the Mughul Messiah has appeared in India while it is subject to the British Government. (c) As regards moral and religious conditions: the Mírzá Sahib draws a rather impressive parallel between the moral and religious needs which nineteen hundred years ago required the presence of Jesus Christ, and the same needs to-day both in Islam and in Christianity, which, with equal insistence, call for the promised Messiah. Morally the times are out of joint. The special sins of Christendom are drunkenness, prostitution and gambling; those of Islam, the *ghazi* spirit, immorality, lack of love. Religiously, the condition of things is no better. Islam is cursed with the doctrines of *jihád*, a bloody Mahdi, and tomb worship; Christianity, with such false views as the deification of Jesus Christ, belief in His atoning death and in His literal second coming. Such evils “call for a reformer,” to rebuke the immoralities of the age and to arbitrate between the different religions. (d) As regards mission: the Mírzá Qáđiani claimed to be, like Jesus Christ, a divinely-appointed mediator between God and man, and so a true intercessor with God for man. To sum up, the Mírzá Sahib claimed to be the spiritual leader of his age, the mediator between God and man, the promised Mahdi or spiritual warrior of God, the *Hakam*, or divinely-sent arbitrator, the second Adam, the true Aḥmad or spiritual manifestation of the prophet Mohammed, the promised Messiah, and metaphorically a manifestation of deity. (e) As regards credentials: Ahmad of Qáđian claimed to be like Jesus of Nazareth as regards the “signs” which accompanied his mission. These signs are both natural and supernatural, and consist of miracles, fulfilled predictions, answers to prayer, eloquence in the Arabic tongue, growth in the number of disciples, good effect of the doctrine, etc.

Such, then, are the proofs, both negative and positive,

by which Aḥmad of Qáđian sought to demonstrate his claim to be the promised Messiah. By claiming to be at once the promised Mahdi, the promised Avatar, and the promised Messiah, Mírzá Ghulam Aḥmad sought to focus upon himself the Messianic expectations of Hindus, Mohammedans and Christians alike. It was a bold bid for the spiritual sovereignty of the world.

According to the census of 1901, the Panjab reported 1113 followers of the Mírzá Sahib, and the United Provinces reported 931. The Bombay Presidency returned roughly "over 10,000."\* In the year 1904 the Mírzá claimed "more than 200,000 followers."† For 1911 the Panjab has returned 18,695 members of the Ahmadiya. Statistics for the rest of India are not available as yet; but the growth in the Panjab as compared with 1901 has been remarkable. On the basis of such facts as are available, probably 50,000 is a liberal estimate of the present strength of the Ahmadiya. Mírzá Ghulam Aḥmad, the founder and first head, died in 1908. He was in many respects an impressive religious personality. His successor, Hakim Nur-ud-Din, is a common-place character. Under these circumstances it is very doubtful whether the Ahmadiya will continue to prosper.

Many of the members of the Ahmadiya are well-to-do people, and a fair number are graduates of universities. The membership of the sect is recruited almost entirely from the ranks of Islam. It may be regarded as a disintegrating movement within the bounds of Mohammedan orthodoxy. As a force making for progress, the Ahmadiya cannot be compared with the Aligarh School. If the Ahmadiya should break up, it will be a question whether it will be re-absorbed into orthodox Islam, or whether its members will take refuge in the rationalism of the Aligarh School, or find their true "promised Messiah" in the Christ of Christianity.

*Lahore.*

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\* Manifestly inaccurate.

† Clearly an exaggeration.