

THE AHMADIYA MOVEMENT TO-DAY *

—:o:—

THE Ahmadiya Sect was founded in the village of Qadian, Gurdaspur district, Punjab (fifty miles from Lahore, the capital), about thirty-five years ago, by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who claimed to be the Mahdi of Islam, the Christian Messiah, and the final *avatara* (Incarnation) of the Hindus. For an account of the history of the Mirza Sahib, and the arguments by which he sought to substantiate his claims, we would refer the reader to Dr. Griswold's pamphlet, "Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Mahdi Messiah of Qadian,"† or to the recent excellent summary of the movement, largely based on Dr. Griswold's original studies, by Mr. J. N. Farquhar, to be found in "Modern Religious Movements in India."‡

Dr. Griswold's article in THE MOSLEM WORLD was written in the critical period, following the death of the founder in 1908, when the direction of the movement had been committed to Hakim Nur-ud-Din, the successor and first "Khalifa," as he had been the early disciple and constant support (the Abu Bakr), of the "Promised Messiah." Dr. Griswold's article concluded as follows :

"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."

* THE MOSLEM WORLD for October, 1912, contained an article on "The Ahmadiya Movement," by Dr. H. D. Griswold, Secretary to the Council of American Presbyterian Missions in India. The purpose of the present article is to note the important developments which have occurred within the Sect during the past three years.

† Published by the American Tract Society, Ludhiana, 1902.

‡ The Macmillan Company, New York, 1915. Page 137, ff.

Already a further division, which may mark the first stage of the dissolution suggested above, has occurred, and its probable results are becoming manifest. It was inevitable that, unless Mirza Ghulam Ahmad—a powerful and magnetic personality—should be succeeded by a man of great vigour and tact, some of the original impetus of the movement would be lost. Hakim Nur-ud-Din did not possess an outstanding personality in any sense, but he seems to have been endowed with a certain degree of sagacity, and he wisely made no peculiar claims for himself but quietly accepted the position of first Khalifa of the movement, for which he had been designated by the founder before the latter's death. However, Qadian could never be the same, bereft of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's dominating person, and from 1908 until Hakim Nur-ud-Din's death, early in the year 1914, the sect progressed much more slowly and with less of the blowing of trumpets and noisy denunciation of every other religious body which had characterised Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's propaganda.

After the death of Hakim Nur-ud-Din, the spark of discontent and dissension which had been slowly smouldering burst into flame. It had its beginning in the Mohammedan misunderstanding of Government's attempted action in connection with the mosque at Cawnpore in 1913, on account of which the entire Moslem community in India was seething with varied emotions until the affair was settled to the satisfaction of all by His Excellency the Viceroy.* Until then the Ahmadiya sect had been a unit in its supreme concern with religion and its avowed divorce from political affairs and divisions. At that time, however, there arose a party within the Movement which made common cause with other Muslims throughout India, especially with leading members of the All-India Moslem League, in demanding

* The Mohammedan riots in Cawnpore, early in August, 1913, and the subsequent agitation of Moslems throughout India, were due to Government's action in attempting to remove an abutting portion of a mosque in Cawnpore in order to re-align a road. In consequence of the agitation the attempt was abandoned, and the whole case, arising from the riots, in which many were killed and wounded, was quashed.

immediate action by Government. In the vanguard of this group was Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, a former Lahore barrister, who had been a staunch supporter of the Mirza Sahib, and was at one time assistant editor of *The Review of Religions*, published by the movement at Qadian. He had proceeded to England in 1912, as a missionary of Islam, and had become Maulvi of the new Mohammedan centre at Woking, and had founded the paper now known as the *Islamic Review and Muslim India*.* Through this periodical and also through the *Paigham-i-Sulah* of Lahore, a vernacular newspaper, Kamal-ud-Din and other leading Ahmadiya adherents urged the grievance of the Mohammedan community in connection with Government's action and the subsequent riots at Cawnpore. Immediately, the late Mirza Sahib's eldest son, Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, then editing *Alfazal*, another Ahmadiya vernacular paper, with the apparent support of the Khalifa, dissociated himself from this political agitation, and declared that it constituted a perilous departure from the wise policy of his father, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. The agitation was disposed of by the Viceroy's action above-mentioned, but a spark of resentment had been lighted in the Ahmadiya community against the Mirza's son, whose relationship to the founder gave his opinions peculiar weight in some quarters.

Hakim Nur-ud-Din, before his death, seems not to have followed the example of his predecessor in designating his successor. The two parties within the movement, however, had not been inactive during his last illness. The disaffected party, responding to the lead of M. Muhammad Ali, M.A., the capable editor of *The Review of Religions*, had prepared a pamphlet which was intended to prevent the members of the community from choosing Mirza Bashir Ahmad as the next Khalifa. This pamphlet was circulated widely as soon as Hakim Nur-ud-Din died, while at the same time preparations already made by the other party bore fruit in a hurried gathering at Qadian at which Mirza Bashir Ahmad was

* See THE MOSLEM WORLD, January, 1914, page 195 ; April, 1915, page 200.

duly elected the second Khalifa of the Ahmadiya community. The party of Mohammed Ali considered that the election had not been legally carried out, and soon the newspapers were full of charges and counter-charges. It was evident that a considerable section of the community, including a number of the wealthiest and cleverest men, would under no circumstances acknowledge the authority of Mirza Bashir Ahmad. Up to this time, in accordance with Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's last will, the affairs of the movement had been administered by the *Sadr-Anjuman-Ahmadiya* (Chief Ahmadiya Society). With the advent of Mirza Bashir Ahmad, his enemies declared that the Khalifa became superior to the *Anjuman*, and, taking sole control of the finances and government, began an autocratic rule made possible only because he was his father's son, for which reason the superstitious people in and about Qadian were ready to follow him unreservedly. Thereupon a group of influential men, headed by M. Mohammed Ali, Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din and Rahmat Ullah, founded a new *Anjuman*, in May, 1914, called the *Ahmadiya-Anjuman-i-Isha 'at-i-Islam* (Society for the Spread of Islam), with its centre in Lahore, which they declared would represent and carry on the true tradition and spirit of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.

More than a year has passed since the division occurred and the differences have so far deepened as to seem irreconcilable. The members of the Qadian *Anjuman*, under the guidance of the "second Khalifa," claim that the other *Anjuman* will ultimately be absorbed into Islam proper, as it seeks to minimise the importance of Ahmad's peculiar teachings and to emphasise its essential oneness with Sunni Islam. The seceders admit that they regard other Mussalmans as Moslems and not "Kafirs" (unbelievers), as do the followers of Bashir Ahmad*; and they repudiate the alleged superstition of the latter, but, on the other hand, they continue true to Ahmad's unique teaching regarding the death and burial of

* The Qadian party call other Moslems "Jews," not actually "Kafirs" as they are accused by their opponents of doing. *Vide* page 78.

Jesus in Kashmir,* they regard Ahmad as the reformer sent for this generation, and they hold that, in time, all Mohammedans will accept those two facts and that so the breach will be healed. They do not regard as important Ahmad's decrees, that no Ahmadi shall follow an orthodox imam in prayer or attend a non-Ahmadi's funeral service, and that no Ahmadi shall give the hand of his daughter to a non-Ahmadi husband although his son may marry non-Ahmadi girls. They regard these prohibitions as having had only a temporary significance in the early days of the movement, and hence no longer important.

There is little, if any, active propaganda carried on by the Lahore *Anjuman* on behalf of the Ahmadiya movement, as such. Nevertheless, its members have inherited, in full measure, Ahmad's militant anti-Christian prejudices, although in their attempt to besmirch the character of Christ the "sinless" person of Mohammed only is contrasted with Christ, and nothing is said of the unique virtues of the "promised Messiah." Furthermore, there is an unmistakable drift, in the Lahore *Anjuman*, toward the rationalism of the late Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, now represented by the Aligarh party within orthodox Islam, although the spirit of this group of Ahmad's followers is far less irenic and tolerant than was that of the founder of the M. A. O. College at Aligarh. Ahmad had inveighed specifically against Sir Syed Ahmad and his rationalistic views, and also against the All-India Moslem League and its political aims, yet Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din is a member of the latter organisation, and is not only friendly to the Aligarh party but declares himself to be a rationalist in the same sense in which Sir Syed was. He appeals to Mohammedans of every school to support *The Islamic Review* and the English Mission. In the pages of that journal there is no evidence that the editors are loyal followers of Ahmad as "the promised

† Ahmad taught that Jesus was taken down alive from the Cross, was healed through the miraculous efficacy of the *marham-i-Isa* (Ointment of Jesus) travelled to Kashmir and died and was buried in Srinagar after a long ministry to "the lost sheep of the House of Israel."

Messiah," nor is any adherence to Ahmadiya doctrines required on the part of those in England who have adopted Islam through the activities of Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din's mission. Between the facts stated in the two preceding sentences, many will see a relationship of cause and effect.

The only educational effort which I have been able to discover on the part of the Lahore *Anjuman* is a "college" for training Moslem missionaries in Lahore. I am informed by a member of the *Anjuman* that the "admission qualifications for the college are the matriculation examination of the Punjab University or other equivalent examination, or Munshi Fazil, or Maulvi Fazil, that is, high proficiency in Persian or Arabic, with English equivalent." The staff consists of a "Professor of Hadis," a "Professor of Bible, Hebrew, and Arabic Grammar," and a "Professor of Islamic and other history." I could obtain no information regarding the number of students.

It might be of interest to give a reply elicited from a member of the staff of *The Review of Religions* at Qadian, when an enquiry regarding the "college" was made in that quarter :

"There exists no college worth the name, for a class of hired students (about half a dozen) taking instructions from an ordinary maulvi and an incompetent Christian convert cannot rightly be termed a college. I do not think that such an irregular institution can do useful work. There are already a lot of classes of the kind opened and maintained by Moslems, but they all lack the life-giving spirit, so marvellously manifest in the institutions of Qadian. You may guess the reason, for the living and the dead cannot be on the same par ; and the nominal followers of Ahmad of Qadian cannot reap a good harvest after their vain attempts at putting a scythe to the green fields of Qadian. They will, along with their mimic institution, disappear from the scene in the near future, and be merged in the vast but dead Moslem community. This being the case, what sort of work can this so-called college do, and what good can we expect from it ? "

I am inclined to the opinion that the Qadian view of the unimportance of this particular college is correct, as I have many times passed the building, with the huge sign proclaiming its identity, and I have yet to observe any sign of life about the premises. Whether or not it has within it the promise of future development and success it is impossible to say.

In addition to the college, other activities of the Lahore *Anjuman* consist of the publication of the tri-weekly *Paigham-i-Sulah* in Urdu, and also of some literature, including a translation of the Koran into English by M. Mohammed Ali, the President of the *Anjuman*, who also lectures on the text of the Koran in the Ahmadiya buildings at Lahore. The *Anjuman* claims to have several missionaries in different parts of India, whose purpose is "to advance the cause of Islam." *The Islamic Review* is published in English at Woking, and, in addition, an Urdu edition is published in Lahore, and a Malay edition in Singapore.

We turn now to the original *Anjuman* and the second Khalifa, with headquarters in Qadian. The controversy with the alleged disloyal party has had the effect of fusing their loyalty and intensifying their zeal, as being now the orthodox, faithful people. The present Khalifa does not seem to be a man of his father's force, although, as he is still a young man, it is too early to appraise his character. He is described as follows by a friendly writer in the issue of *The Review of Religions* for June, 1915 :

"He is a young man below thirty years of age, fair of complexion, of medium height, slender of build, with a clean broad forehead, thin lips, thick short beard, eyes which through their half-open lids always look to the ground, modest and retiring habits ; such is the appearance of the man who now guides the destiny of this community . . . His life is simple and retiring and his manners sincere and affable."—*Review of Religions*, Vol. XIV., No. 6, page 217.

There seem to be no such outstanding personalities in this segment as there are in the Lahore *Anjuman* ; but there is an earnest spirit of enterprise and industry. The Khalifa, through the *Sadr-Anjuman* in Qadian, is vigorously pushing forward education in the community. The keystone is the English high school at Qadian, affiliated to the Punjab University. The former headmaster, Maulvi Sadr-ud-Din, B.A., B.T., is now Imam of the mosque at Woking, England, having gone out with the secessionists. His successor, Maulvi Mohammed Din, B.A., S.A.V., is ably prosecuting the work in the new building just completed. There is likewise a *madrassah* for the study of Arabic and the Koran.

Primary schools have been opened in different districts and many more are projected. A beginning has been made in the education of women, and the status of women, on the whole, seems to be above the standard obtaining in Islam generally. The veil is less urgently insisted upon than elsewhere, and women worship, behind a curtain, in the mosques.

On the literary side, in addition to the English monthly paper, *The Review of Religions*, less vigorously edited than in the long period of M. Mohammed Ali's editorship, the following vernacular papers are published at Qadian: tri-weekly, *Alfazal*; weekly, *Alhakam*, *Nur*; monthly, *Tashiz-ul-Azhan*, *The Review of Religions* in Urdu; quarterly, *Tafsir-ul-Quran*. I am told that there is also a paper called *Pan-Islamisme*, published in French and English at Port Louis, and that a new periodical *Alfaruq*, is expected to appear soon, under the editorship of Mir Qasim Ali, late editor of *Alhaq*, Delhi. A former paper, *Badr*, whose stormy career was interrupted by Government in 1914, has not since re-appeared.

The new *Anjuman Taraqqi-i-Islam* (Society for the Advancement of Islam), founded by the present Khalifa to supplement the work of the *Sadr Anjuman*, has been active in missionary efforts. It claims to be supporting twelve paid missionaries in different parts of India, Ceylon and Mauritius, as well as in London, where there is one, with a paid assistant, whose work is entirely distinct from that of the Kamal-ud-Din party. Ambitious plans—or at least hopes—are afoot to send further missionaries to “England, Ceylon, Java, Japan, China, the Philippines, etc.” In addition to these regular workers, “All the Ahmadis are regarded as honorary workers, and school teachers as well as editors are also sent on preaching tours whenever occasions arise.” The converts have mostly come from the ranks of orthodox Islam. Free copies of *The Review of Religions* are sent to public libraries in different parts of the world, as a part of this missionary effort.

Certainly in some parts of India the sect is gaining converts—particularly in East Bengal, in the Deccan, Malabar and the Punjab; but this gain may be much

more than counter-balanced by the defection of original members whose allegiance has not survived the storms and changes which have followed Ahmad's death. It is altogether impossible to give even an approximate idea of the present number of Ahmad's followers, exclusive of the few hundred members of the *Anjuman-i-Isha'at-i-Islam*, who can be regarded as negligible. In 1904 Ahmad made the exaggerated claim to possessing 200,000 followers, which he did not and could not support. Before he died, in 1908, this number had increased to 500,000 in his imagination. Over against this we must place the returns of the Punjab census of 1911, which credited to the Ahmadiya sect 18,695 followers.* Dr. Griswold, in 1912, believed that 50,000 would be a liberal estimate of the numerical strength of the movement at that time. Allowing that, at the outside, it may have increased by a few thousands since that time, it is apparent that, as yet, the Ahmadiya sect represents numerically but a drop in the bucket of the great ocean of Islam.

With regard to the present beliefs of the members of the Qadian Anjuman, one of them, who speaks with authority, has given me the following three chief tenets :

" 1. The Koran is the word of Allah revealed to the holy Prophet, Mohammed, whose own words are preserved in the tradition. It is from A to Z, with the arrangement of chapters and even vowels, from Allah. It is the perfect and final code of law, and the words of the Prophet, as embodied in the traditions, are its commentary.

" 2. Revelation did not stop with Mohammed ; it is nowadays also sent to the righteous servants of God. The living example of a recipient of Revelation has been, in our time, the person of Ahmad the promised Messiah. This continued revelation is only for the support of the Koran and of the truth of Mohammed's mission.

3. Mohammed is, according to Ahmad's teaching, the perfect man and model for human guidance. He is free from sin. He is a servant of Allah. It is he through whom one can have access to the gates of heaven. To say that Christ, son of Mary, will come for the reform of Mohammed's people is to us a blasphemy and derogatory to the high dignity of the Prophet of Arabia."

Regarding the respective positions of Mirza Ghulam

* The All-India Census report for 1911 deals with the Mohammedan population as a whole, without giving returns for particular sects. There is nothing in the Punjab Census report to indicate that the figures there given as the total strength of the sect are intended to refer only to the Punjab.

Ahmad and Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad, the same informant writes :

“ Mirza Ghulam Ahmad came in the spirit of Christ and was the second manifestation of the Prophet of Arabia. His advent was promised by all the prophets of yore. Sahibzada (Bashir Ahmad) is the second successor of the promised Messiah, and it is believed that promises for the spiritual revival and progress of Islam are to be fulfilled in his time. He is the promised son of the promised Messiah ; for the Messiah was to marry and beget a son.”

In this we trace a possible beginning of a “ doctrine of the person of the second Khalifa,” who clearly occupies already a position superior to that of Hakim Nur-ud-Din, in whose veins no blood of the promised Messiah flowed, and in whose day no prophecy of a spiritual revival was destined to be fulfilled.

A belief in the intercession of Mohammed on the last day, and in the miracles of the prophets, are other articles of faith. The May, 1915, issue of *The Review of Religions* explains how it was possible for Ahmad to be a prophet in spite of the universal Moslem belief that Mohammed was the seal (*i.e.*, the last) of the prophets :

“ . . . a man can even gain prophethood by the help of our Lord Mohammed's spiritual powers. But no prophet with a new book or having been appointed direct will ever come ; for in this case it would be an insult to the perfect prophethood of our Lord . . . According to this we believe that a man—the promised Messiah—has gained prophethood in spite of his being a follower of our Lord ” (*i.e.*—of Mohammed).—*Review of Religions*, Vol. XIV., No. 5, page 196.

Darwishes, Sufis, saint-worship and asceticism of all kinds are forbidden, yet it seems that already the tomb of Ahmad has become an object of superstitious regard in the eyes of his followers, whose desire and duty it is to visit Qadian at one of the annual gatherings, held each December, there to behold the scenes of the promised Messiah's life and ministry and to offer prayer before his tomb. It must in fairness be admitted that, whereas the present Khalifa urges all true Ahmadis to come to Qadian for the annual gathering as often as possible, superstitious regard for the tomb is not officially encouraged. Nevertheless, it is not impossible of belief that Qadian may one day become to Ahmadis what Kerbela is to the Shi'ahs, as a place of pilgrimage, in contradistinction to Mecca and Medina.

The work of the two Qadian *Anjumans* is supported by contributions of the faithful throughout India* ; and, in addition, every true believer is expected to leave behind him a will which bequeathes at least one-tenth of his property to the cause. The Qadian community makes no appeal to orthodox Moslems for funds, and, so far as I know, is wholly supported by Ahmadis. The newer *Anjuman* claims to have spent Rs. 18,000 on missionary activities during the past year.

One curious recent development of the movement has been the rise from the ranks of three, possibly four, new claimants to promised Messiahship or second Khalifahood, in different parts of India. Perhaps the most interesting of these is Abdulla of Timapur, a village in the Deccan, about 170 miles from Hyderabad, where there has been an Ahmadiya community of several hundred weavers since the year 1892. Abdulla became a Wahabi at sixteen years of age, and, at the age of thirty-six, a "Mirzai," as followers of the Mirza Sahib were called at that time. He twice made the pilgrimage to Qadian, learned to read Urdu, though he speaks Kanarese, and soon became a leader in the little community at Timapur. He is very popular in the village, and when, several years ago, he declared, "I am the man sent from God ; you must all follow me. I am the real Khalifa of Qadian," most of his fellow-weavers did indeed follow him, though the faithful Ahmadis of the neighbourhood became as bitter in their antagonism as the Sunni Moslems, who have secured an order from His Highness the Nizam's Government that he be forbidden to preach outside of his *masjid*. Several times he has been dragged into court. I am informed by an Indian Christian clergyman, of the neighbouring town of Shorapur, from whom most of the above facts were secured, that Abdulla, previously sharing the Ahmadiya hostility to Christianity, is now on very friendly terms with Christians, that he "believes in the Trinity in his own way, and allows Christian preachers to preach in his own *masjid*." He is still but forty-eight years of age,

* The regular *Zakat* (alms) must all be sent to Qadian, as the *Bait-ul-Mal* (Treasury).

and it is impossible to predict what will be the future of this man who has been Sunni Moslem, Wahabi and Ahmadi, in succession, and has now become a religion to himself. It is difficult for the uninitiated to understand why Abdulla is not as much entitled to consideration for his more modest claims as Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was for his audacious ones. Yet Abdulla and the other claimants to the Khalifat are regarded as mad by the authorities of Qadian. The origin of their aberration is thus explained: "Ahmadis are religious people and inspirations, visions, prophecies and signs are their every day talk; and this is why, when an Ahmadi runs mad, he speaks of the above things, and some superstitious men are sure to surround him."

In conclusion, what shall we say of the future of the movement? Regarding those in the rationalistic group, whose centres are Lahore and Woking, they are clearly drifting into the haven of Aligarh, with its new political atmosphere created and expressed by the Moslem League, themselves carrying with them a further new element of bitter enmity to Jesus Christ, which was no more characteristic of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan than was political agitation. It is doubtful if any influence of Ahmad's attitude and teaching, beyond that just mentioned, will cling about them for long.

The Qadian section, with ever-deepening loyalty to Ahmad's memory and teaching, probably represents a permanent, though dwindling, schism in Islam in India, which is destined to gather to itself those Moslems to whom Mohammed and Mecca seem far away and unreal, whose faith is quickened and whose hearts are warmed by the virile message of this nineteenth century "Messiah" and reformer who has lived and died in their own land. Certainly Ahmad himself did everything possible to make the division permanent, by the prohibitions mentioned above* and by his unsparing denunciation of the evils of orthodox Islam and the corruption of her priests.† It has become the Ahmadiya fashion to call

* *Vide* page 4.

† Since these lines were written an Indian Christian friend, who has been a close student of the Ahmadiya schism in the Punjab, has

non-Ahmadi Moslems "Jews," because, although they were the children of the promise, they rejected their "Messiah" when he appeared, even as the Jews of the first century rejected Jesus of Nazareth. That this remnant will at last discover that their true Messiah is buried neither in Qadian nor in an obscure tomb in distant Srinagar, Kashmir, but "ever liveth to make intercession" for all sinful men, must be our hope and prayer.

HOWARD ARNOLD WALTER.

stated to me his conviction that the chief attraction, for those orthodox Moslems who enter the Ahmadiya community to-day, lies in the teaching regarding the death of Jesus, which gives them a way of escape from the predicament in which they find themselves in controversy with Christians who point out the logical conclusion to be drawn from the orthodox Mohammedan belief in a dead and buried Mohammed and an ascended and living Jesus ('Isa, Son of Mariam, in the Quran).