

The devotion of the Ahmadiyya of Kababir to their faith is noticeably deeper than the practice of the 137,000 orthodox Muslims of Israel.⁸ Particularly noticeable is the participation of young people. It is not uncommon to see a twelve year old youth performing his prayers side by side with a sheikh seventy years of age in the Ahmadiyya mosque.⁹

While on visits in the village the writer has witnessed elderly men and even women performing the prayers in their homes. In

the estimation of a respected orthodox Muslim who lives in Kababir, attendance at the Ahmadiyya mosque for prayers is better than in

other Muslim communities in Israel.¹⁰ This devotion to prayer is in striking contrast to the apathy in religious practice noted in some

Muslim countries. In a survey conducted by A. Boudiba of the religious practice of Muslims in Tunisia, he noted with dismay that

88% of the men under thirty-five years of age were absolute non-practitioners of prayer.¹¹

The Ahmadiyya of Kababir follow the Hanafiyyah practice of

folding the arms to the elbow at the beginning of prayer, which is the practice of the Ahmadiyya Movement around the world. This is the

most conspicuous difference between orthodox and Ahmadiyya practice. The orthodox follow the Malikiyyah tradition which leaves the arms at

the side. One Ahmadiyya missionary described this as 'our sign',

Also, it was noted that the Ahmadiyya do not use the rosary for counting

⁸ This population figure is a pre-1967 estimate.

⁹ Baker, Kababir, al-Jannah, September-October 1966, p. 6.

¹⁰ Tabari, Questionnaire, February 10, 1970.

¹¹ A. Boudiba, "Islam in Tunisia", The Proceedings of the First International Congress of Africanists (London: Longman, 1964), p. 143.

out the closing prayers. Instead they repeat the formula for prayer, using the joints of the fingers for counting. The Ahmadiyya always pray separately from orthodox Muslims. The Ahmadiyya follow only one criterion in prayer, that is, the practice of Muhammad.¹²

The activities of the Ahmadiyya fellowship in Kababir seek to meet the religious needs of all age groups. The men and the boys receive instruction in the mosque in the form of general sermons, Qur'an lessons, studies in the Hadith, and the advice of the Ahmadiyya missionary.¹³ The girls receive instruction three times a week in religion and the English language from the evangelist's wife in the mission house.¹⁴ Qur'anic classes for boys and girls are taught in the local school. In the homes one can see large pictures containing all the verses of the Qur'an hanging on the walls.

There are plans for the establishing of a school to prepare religious leaders in the coming years. This school, according to former Sheikh Bashir, would be open to all Muslims and would teach only true Islamic education (al-ta'lim al-Islamiyya al-Hanifa), with out entering into denominational disputes. He added also that, "The fellowship is speeding the acceptance of the authorities for the sending of other missionaries from India who will benefit us by their learning."¹⁵

¹² Humphrey J. Fisher, Ahmadiyyah (Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 133-134. This worldwide practice was confirmed by Mr. Ahmad Said, the representative of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Hartford, Connecticut, on May 1, 1970.

¹³ Tabari, Questionnaire.

¹⁴ Sheikh Bashir, Al-Jama'ah, p. 6

¹⁵ Sheikh Bashir, Al-Jama'ah, p. 7.

The criteria used for admittance of missionaries into Israel is usually the status quo that existed when the state was established in 1948. Religious organizations that were recognized as Ottoman Societies under the British Mandate usually have no problem in gaining the entrance of missionaries into Israel.

The Sheikh's recognition of the need for trained leadership is symptomatic of a problem faced by most missionary groups in Israel. In the past, great emphasis has been placed on foreign leadership. This is natural considering the political history of Palestine.

Ahmadyyat, as well as other missionary groups, will be successful ultimately, when it has enabled the local population to assume true leadership of its affairs, and no longer requires foreign leadership. The Ahmadyya of Kababir are noted as being more interested in religion than the inhabitants of any other Muslim village in Israel. Sheikh Bashir accounted for this devotion with the statement, "We are a movement and the movement must be active -- and here is the starting point." The Ahmadyya fellowship of Kababir is evangelistic by its very nature and shares in the larger Ahmadyya emphasis on preaching, teaching and witness to their faith.

All of the Ahmadyya of Kababir are converts from orthodox Islam.¹⁷ The rigid system of religious communities or millets in the area has prevented any conversions from Christianity or Judaism.

There seems to be a general apathy among all religious groups to conversion outside of the religion into which a person is born. Therefore, the Ahmadyya of Kababir seem to have contented themselves with this arrangement, and attempted to win only orthodox Muslims into their group. It is very rare for a Jew to convert to Islam in Israel. In the only case known by the writer, the converted man left Israel and is living in an Arab country.

¹⁶ Sheikh Bashir, Al-Jama'ah, p. 7.
¹⁷ Tabari, Questionnaire.

It is more unusual that the Ahmadiyya in Kababir have not made any attempt to convert their Christian neighbors. The claims of Ghulam Ahmad to be the promised Messiah would seem to presuppose that there would be attempts to convert Christians. Fisher found that in West Africa that 80% of the Ahmadiyya converts were from orthodox Islam, 15% from Christianity, and only 5% from pagan religions.¹⁸ Kababir is unusual in that the Ahmadiyya there have allowed a Christian missionary group, the Baptists, to enter the village as evangelists to the Christians who are members of the various Catholic and Orthodox Christian churches.

The devotion of the Ahmadiyya of Kababir has been nurtured from the beginning by a succession of well-trained evangelists from India. Sheikh Jalal al-Din Qumir, a vigorous and personable man served from 1958 until 1966. He was succeeded by his brother, Sheikh Ulahi Bashir, who had a short but influential ministry. The present evangelist is Sheikh Bashir al-Din Allah. These evangelists have been educated men. Each has had an excellent grasp of the English language and classical Arabic. They dress in the style of northern India with a white turban and grey "Nehru" coat (Sirwani). They have yielded strong influence in the community through their teachings and personalities. They have in addition to leadership in prayers and teaching published an Arabic periodical, Al-Bushra,¹⁹ which is distributed among the Muslim Arabs of Israel. The Ahmadiyya faith permeates all aspects of life in Kababir; religious, educational, social, and political. But the Ahmadiyya evangelists have emphasized that this influence is not of compulsion, but of persuasion.

¹⁸ Fisher, Ahmadiyyah, p. 185.

¹⁹ Al-Bushra, (Haifa: Kababir, Box 6088).

The Ahmadiyya of Kababir place emphasis on education as do the Ahmadiyya communities in Pakistan and West Africa. The local school in Kababir has eight grades, the legal requirement in Israel, and it plans to add another grade next year. It is the only private Muslim school in Israel. The headmaster of the Kababir School is Falaḥ al-Dīn Odeh, a member of the leading Ahmadiyya family in Kababir. Qur'an classes are taught for boys and girls in the school. Only two of its nine teachers have a college education and only one has a certificate from the Arab Teachers Seminar in Haifa. Seventy per cent of the young men of the Ahmadiyya community finish high school, which is above average for Arabs in Israel. In addition, 98% of the adult men are literate and 70% of the women. The young women under 35 years of age are all literate. Of women over 35 years old, only 20% are literate. The Ahmadiyya of Kababir, then, are the most literate community among the Arab population of Israel.

There is a serious education problem, unfortunately typical to most Arabs and many oriental Jews in Israel. Only three per cent of the young men of Kababir finish college. There are many reasons; lack of incentive due to cultural background and lack of job opportunities for graduates, and the inability to compete with European and other western Jews in college entrance exams, to name only a few.

The problem of the 'educated Arab youth' is described by Cohen in his study of Arab border villages:

... The number of Arab youths graduating from secondary schools and from institutions of higher learning has been increasing rapidly without a corresponding increase in the number of 'suitable jobs' open to them. The youths became disillusioned and bitter, and so also did their families, who had spent a lot of their education in the expectation that the youths would get 'white-collar', highly esteemed jobs. The possibilities of their employment in government offices were limited, and differences of language and culture, as well as prejudice and suspicion, prevented Jewish concerns from employing them. . . . 25

He points out in the footnotes that for a while the expanding educational system absorbed Arabs as teachers, but eventually offered too few jobs for the number of graduates available. Also, Jewish students did not suffer the same discrimination because they served in the Army and were able to acquire skills while in service, and could study in technical courses that were not open to most Arabs because of "security reasons".

The Arab birthrate in Israel is three times higher than that of Western Jews. The Israeli Government is not unaware of the problem and has doubled or tripled the size of many Arab village schools in the last two years. These efforts have managed barely to keep up with the population increase. With the addition of a ninth class in the compulsory education system next year, the situation will be even worse. Of the Muslim population in Israel,

close to 60% are under 20 years of age.²⁶

Many rural Muslim villages suffer from the problem of truancy during the harvest season when children are expected to help their

parents in the fields.²⁷ Kababir is an urban community and fortunately does not suffer from this particular problem. Israel now has

compulsory education for all children between the ages of five and fifteen years.

The school in Kababir functions primarily for the children of Ahmadiyya families, which is natural in a community where the majority of the inhabitants is Ahmadi. The "millet system" of

religious communities inherited by Israel from the British and Turks allows religion to be taught in the schools. This practice has created a problem for the children of Christian families in Kababir. Former Sheikh Bashir expressed concern for this matter and explained that the Christian children were not compelled to learn Ahmadiyya

teaching because, "The school is not evangelistically based." And, "It is nothing more than a cultural institution." He had requested, for the benefit of the Christian students, that a priest or Christian teacher come to Kababir to teach the Christian pupils in the school. But his request went unheeded. "There is no religious compulsion in our school," he affirmed. "If there can be found a Christian teacher for this purpose, let him come."²⁸

The lack of response from the Christian clergy may be

explained by the scarcity of priests in most of the Christian churches in Israel. Also, the small number of Christians in Kababir, only

²⁶ Government of Israel, 1959a, p. 21, (Cohen, Arab Border Villages, footnote 2, p. 41).

²⁷ Cohen, Arab Border Villages, p. 36.

²⁸ Sheikh Bashir, Al Jannah, September-October 1966, p. 7.

one hundred, may not have seemed to justify the effort. The answer to this need was to come from another quarter, the concern of a Baptist layman. A description of his work and the special nature of the Christians living in Kababir will be described in Chapter III of this study.

Social ties in Muslim villages in Israel have been determined for the most part by *hamula* (clan) loyalty. Marriages are often arranged between cousins to protect family status, in terms of land and inheritance. Cohen describes how *hamula* loyalty has revived in many Muslim border villages due to the political

tensions between Israel and the Arab countries.²⁹ The writer has observed the close family ties of Israeli Arabs with their relatives across the borders in the Arab countries during his field work in Israel from 1965 to 1969. These ties were most evident at parties preceding weddings when figurative "invitations" were chanted to aunts and uncles across the borders in Lebanon and Jordan. Following the 1967 war between Israel and the Arabs many family reunions were held between the Arabs of Israel and relatives from the West Bank of Jordan. Therefore, the political tensions of the area serve to strengthen rather than weaken family ties and loyalties between Arabs who are separated by borders.

The social situation among the *Ahmadiyya* of Kababir differs in that they have no family ties in the Arab countries and few family ties with other Arab villages in Israel. Their social solidarity is based not so much on family loyalty as it is on religious devotion to the *Ahmadiyya* faith. The *Ahmadiyya* of Kababir claim that *Ahmadiyyat* abolished *hamula* influence in Kababir after 1930. They claim that a new structure of society now exists which is based on religious affiliation rather than family ties.³⁰ It appears then,

²⁹ Cohen, Arab Border Villages, p. 9.
³⁰ Abdullah Odeh, Questionnaire.

that the Ahmadi missionaries have introduced a more western

conception of religious equality, in an attempt to break down social barriers between families. Hamula loyalty can be constructive, but as has happened in some Muslim villages, it can result in power struggles that are detrimental to community life.

This social development of the Ahmadiyya Fellowship in Kababir is explained by 'Abdullah Odeh, the Secretary of the Ahmadiyya Mosque:

Never in Kababir was the term Hamula in use whether before or after Ahmadiyyat, but simply family relations or branch families of the main Odeh expanded family. Before Ahmadiyyat people were more strongly affiliated to their branch families but after the establishing of Ahmadiyyat this relation weakened to a great extent, I mean concerning public matters. It is wrong to assert that Islam or Ahmadiyya as a branch of it neglects family relations. Rather it is often asserted in the Quran. But concerning public affairs things must be managed according to

31 constitutional channels, in other words, Islamic law.

In the particular case of social structure of Kababir it appears that what sociologists term as a hamula has become the Ahmadiyya fellowship. Though the term hamula is not used to describe the social structure, it is evident that one family plays the dominant role in the religious, educational, and social affairs of the community. This is a natural situation when an entire family converts to a new faith, and that family is a leader in community affairs.

Also, by virtue of having converted to Ahmadiyyat, a family or person is cut off from contacts with relatives who remain orthodox. The new group that is formed becomes in itself a form of harm that gives a new social identity to the converts. Clan loyalty, being a symbol of the old life, is, therefore, rejected, and the new identity, Ahmadiyyat, takes its place. It appears to be a fact of life in the Middle East that when a person converts, he converts from one religious community to another.

In accordance with Ahmadiyya teachings the Ahmadiyya of Kababir marry only other Ahmadiyya. This has the effect, in such a small community, of creating family solidarity, despite the fact that the Ahmadiyya of Kababir do not marry cousins, as do many other Muslims.

The Arab custom of the dowry, or, the bride price, is maintained but young Ahmadiyya men are required to pay less for their bride than is required in most Muslim villages. Most of the Ahmadiyya men earn the bride price rather than borrowing it.

In exceptional cases when an Ahmadi desires to marry a non-Ahmadiyya Muslim, the non-Ahmadiyya has been required to convert. There was a case in Kababir when an Ahmadiyya girl was betrothed to an orthodox Muslim boy from another Muslim village. He converted to Ahmadiyyat and moved to Kababir following the wedding. After the marriage the boy had second thoughts about his conversion. The girl's family came under suspicion of other Ahmadiyya of having joined with the boy in a deception. The situation became more tense when a delegation of orthodox Muslim notables arrived from the boy's village with his father. They demanded that the boy return to his village with them. The situation was saved by a Christian friend who intervened

and remonstrated the boy for his wavering conduct. The notables finally left and returned to their village. The boy and his father were reconciled and the couple united.

This unusual case reveals the subtle consequences of the Ahmadlyya insistence on marriage within the faith, within such a small community as Kababir. It exposed the orthodox Muslim opposition to conversion to Ahmadlyyat, and emphasized the necessity of an arbitrary third party to settle such involved disputes. The matter at stake was not so much the integrity of the boys conversion, but the fact that a marriage had been consummated. To have destroyed the bond then would have meant disgrace both for the girl and her family and for the young man.

The above case must be noted as an exception. Most family problems in Kababir are settled within the families. It appears that the Ahmadlyya faith tempers the hostilities that are so common between the hanna in other Muslim villages. Normally the committee of the mosque in cooperation with the Ahmadlyya missionary try to settle disputes within the village in order to prevent disputes from reaching local police authorities.

Most of the young men live in the village after finishing their education and marrying. Normally a new section or floor is built onto the father's house for the son and his bride. In some cases the son will build a new house separate from his family, but within the village. This requires that he be financially independent. The practice of building separate households for newly married couples has grown in recent years in Israeli Arab communities, particularly when the partners are not cousins.

32 Odeh, Questionnaire.

33 Cohen, Arab Border Villages, p. 54

Women in Ahmadlyyah homes appear to have more freedom than their counterparts in other Muslim villages. The younger Ahmadlyyah women dress in a modest western style and engage freely in conversation. This may be due to their higher rate of literacy and education. Most of their husbands are gainfully employed which means the homes are well furnished and the wives have some leisure time to pursue reading and hobbies. Many of the homes in Kababir have television which provides those in the home with a wider view of the outside world.

But there is still a great measure of restraint exercised in the relation of Ahmadlyyah women to outsiders. The woman is always chaperoned by an adult male relative if visitors appear and the husband is not at home. In general the Ahmadlyyah missionaries in Kababir have advised the girls and young women to dress in a very conservative fashion. There have been times when this advice has been considered by the women as more conservative than necessary. Fisher notes that the seclusion of women is strictly observed by Pakistani missionaries. Their wives never venture out unveiled, and male visitors to the mission house practically never see them.³⁴ It is not unusual that the customs of northern India and Pakistan may be considered as conservative in a city such as Haifa, and by Israel Arabs who are quickly adapting the dress habits of the west. Modesty in social relationships between the sexes is a cardinal principle of the Ahmadlyyah faith as attested by the second article of the Bai'at, the initiation into the Ahmadlyyah Movement:

Secondly, that he will keep away from falsehood, adultery, looking at women other than near relatives, cruelty, dishonesty, riot, and rebellion, and in short, every kind of evil: and will not allow himself to be carried away by his passions, however strong they may be.³⁵

Such an admonition is particularly relevant for Ahmadiyya faithful who live in the midst of a modern, westernized Jewish society. The divergence of Israeli youth from the social and religious norms of their parents is a continuing matter of concern in Israel. The social contacts of the Ahmadiyya with Jews are limited, therefore, to those contacts which are necessitated by employment. When a member of the Ahmadiyya community fails to live by the social norms of the faith, he is disciplined by "strong advice and conviction" by the Ahmadiyya leaders, according to the Secretary of the Ahmadiyya mosque.³⁶ There have been reports of more severe forms of discipline being used after the educational methods fail, but it is not known whether these were the actions of the group or of isolated individuals.

Families who have a heavy financial or medical need are usually aided through the Government Welfare Service. This service is highly developed in Israel and has effective work in many Muslim villages. The health service of the Histradrut, the national labor union, called the Kupat Holim, provides medical services for 65%³⁷ of the Israeli population. Many Arabs are covered as employees of the labor union-related businesses. Arabs have ready access to

³⁵ Quoted from Walter, Ahmadiyya, p. 146.

³⁶ Odeh, Questionnaire.

³⁷ Cohen, Arab Border Villages, p. 25.

local hospitals in Haifa that are operated both by Government and church missions. Most childbirths take place in a hospital. Cohen describes the welfare services offered to Arabs of various villages:

... There is a national insurance scheme which provides for orphans, widows, and the aged. A maternity grant is given to women after childbirth, provided that the delivery takes place in hospital, and supporters of large families get monthly child allowances. Arab welfare officers, working for the Ministry of Social Welfare visit ³⁸ needy families and arrange for their financial assistance.

There is, therefore, no special fund at the mosque in Kababir for welfare purposes. But in special cases the community does try to help. Non-Ahmadyya families in need usually receive help ³⁹ during the Fast of Ramadan.

There is no guest house (diwan) in Kababir, as in many Arab Muslim villages. The community mission house is available for gatherings. Most guests are entertained in the homes of the community.

³⁸ Cohen, Arab Border Villages, p. 41.
³⁹ Odeh, Questionnaire.

Economic Aspects

The employment of men from Kababir is dependent to a great extent on the Israeli economy. The location of Kababir in the midst of a large city and industrial complex provides employment opportunities outside of the village. The only employment available inside the village is for the few teachers at the local school. Due to their higher level of education some of the Ahmadiyya men are employed in government service and teaching. The remainder specialize as skilled artisans in the masonry of Jerusalem or "Italian" stone. This stone work is used in some of the more expensive buildings in Israel. The Ahmadiyya masons are considered Israel's experts in this field.

This explains why the Ahmadiyya homes in Kababir are some of the most modern in design of any in the Arab villages of Israel. Between construction jobs and during Israel's frequent economic recessions, the Ahmadiyya men use their free time to build onto their homes. Many homes in Kababir and in other Arab villages are in some partial stage of construction, as the owners await favorable economic situations to buy materials, or a lag in construction which will free them to work on their own homes. The yards of some homes are cluttered with construction equipment and building materials, awaiting use during such free periods.

Due to the central location of Kababir and the expanding Arab population, one of the prime sources of investment and income within the village is in the rental of rooms and apartments. The Ahmadiyya own most of the land in the village and are therefore the landlords. Young Arab couples are beginning to move to Kababir from distant Gallee villages to be closer to their work. This offers the added advantage of freedom from family domination. Other rooms are rented to Arab young men who have work in Halta or attend one of the schools or colleges nearby. The recently opened Halta University on Mount Carmel admits a number of qualified Arab students and has plans to add Arab professors to its faculty. Halta has good relations between Arabs and Jews but the young men find that renting is cheaper in Kababir and that the environment is more friendly than in predominantly Jewish sections of the city. The small number of orthodox Muslims (50) living in Kababir are employed in farming, semi-skilled construction work, and as hotel staff. The Christians have a variety of employment ranging from painting, taxi driving, restaurant operation, to office work for the better educated. Some of the Christian women from Kababir work as house-keepers in the more well-to-do Jewish homes on the Carmel, and for foreign embassy staff. Most of the Ahmadiyya women do not work outside the home, since their husbands enjoy a better income.

Kababir is incorporated into the city of Haifa. Therefore it

has been in an advantageous position to receive public services

and utilities much earlier than many other Arab villages in Israel.

Kababir received water in 1944 and electricity was installed

in 1963.⁴¹ Unfortunately, some Arab villages in Israel have yet

to receive electricity. The delay is usually caused by the failure

of family groups to cooperate in raising the necessary down payment

required by the Israel Electric Corporation. Water projects are in

progress to provide even the most remote village with necessary

water.

Bus service has been a problem since Kababir is off the main

bus line. A trip up the mountain from the port area of Haifa requires

sometimes two transfers and much time. The village petitioned the

bus company for better service. There are now 35 buses a day into

the village.⁴²

Politics is always a heated subject among Israeli Arabs.

Israel has an active Communist Party which normally captures half

of the Arab vote of Nazareth, the "Arab Capital" of the Galilee.⁴³

This vote is probably more a form of legal protest to the government

than an affirmation of political ideology. Cohen describes how the

⁴¹ Odeh, Questionnaire.

⁴²

Ibid.

⁴³

The population of Nazareth is approximately 30,000 Arabs with the 20,000 Jews living in the new city of "Upper Nazareth".

Arab vote was influenced by the offers of various political parties during the 1959 Israeli election campaign.⁴⁴ Muslim voters were under pressure to abstain from the election due to political

broadcasts from the Arab countries. The Israeli political parties countered with offers of various job opportunities and other financial remuneration in return for votes. The villages were relatively

unconcerned about the outcome of the national elections as they did not feel they would be affected. So they voted for the party with the best offer, or for the party that opposed an unfriendly hamula.

But in local village council elections where many jobs in

local schools and village betterment projects were at stake, the people took particular interest:

... electioneering and voting for parliament, in the

seven (Triangle) villages, went smoothly and peacefully,

and were often overshadowed by the events attending council

elections. But the issues at stake in the council election

were far more fundamental than those of the former. Member-

ship of local councils in Arab border villages has carried until

now, far more power and prestige within the village context,

⁴⁵ than membership in Jewish local councils.

Kababir does not have a local council as its civic needs are provided for by the Haifa municipality. Perhaps this has removed a potential source of friction from the village.

⁴⁴ Cohen, Arab Border Villages, Chapter VII, pp. 146-173.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 170.

Whenever matters of general community interest arise they are handled within the religious framework of the Ahmadiyya fellowship, as is explained by 'Abdullah Odeh, the secretary of the Ahmadiyya Mosque.

... Politically the structure of the Ahmadiyya community is based on the Sharia. After the death of the founder the Khilafat regime as resembling the khilafat-alreshida (the rightly-guided succession) following the Holy Prophet is being followed based on the conception that Ahmadiyyat is the second manifestation of Islam. Coming over to Kababir, the missionary as representing the Khalifa in Rabwa stands at the top of the community structure. Besides him, as an assisting body comes the managing committee elected freely by the members. The general assembly consisting of the whole members meets on important general matters ...

The local politics of Kababir have, therefore, been guided by the Ahmadiyya structure of leadership vested in the missionary who is assisted by a freely elected managing committee. Power is ultimately centered in the missionary, therefore avoiding the rivalries present in the local councils of many other Arab villages. The Ahmadiyya of Kababir appear to be less involved in the diverse politics of Israel than other Arab Muslims. In fact there seems to be a lack of concern in political matters. This is explained by Mr. Odeh, as being due to the fact that, "Ahmadiyyat is a world-wide movement and non-political. It does not recommend membership in any political party. Most Ahmadiyya vote as a group, considering

45 (the) interest of (the) community as a whole"⁴⁷

As we have seen, the Ahmadiyya in Kababir do not have any family ties with Arabs in the Arab countries. This may be another reason that they do not appear concerned with the political tensions of the area. Moreover, as has been noted, the Ahmadiyya movement has been persecuted by orthodox Muslims in the Middle East, and the Ahmadiyya, therefore, may not feel particularly sympathetic to political causes championed by the orthodox Muslims.

Former Sheikh Bashir emphasized that the Ahmadiyya stress religious freedom in their teachings. "If the government does not help us, then we will help ourselves," he said. He related how Chulam Ahmad taught that the Holy War (Jihad) must not be continued by the use of force, but by preaching only. Therefore, the Ahmadiyya claim that they are pacifists and zealous in their evangelization.⁴⁸ The Ahmadiyya of Kababir follow a more spiritual concept of action in political matters than the orthodox Muslims in neighboring Arab countries. Therefore, the Ahmadiyya of Kababir find themselves both politically and spiritually separated from the Arab countries in the current political struggle.

The Sheikh opposed the view of other Muslims who say that they are 'cut off from the world.' This is an obvious reference to the political separation of Israeli Muslims from their families and friends across the borders in the Arab countries. "On the contrary," said the Sheikh, "we are not cut off, we are in the world. Hope comes from within, and not from without. If the government does not help you, help yourself."⁴⁹

47 Odeh, Questionnaire.

48 Sheikh Bashir, Al Jama'ah, p. 6

49 Sheikh Bashir, Al Jama'ah, p. 7

He advocated a form of religious attainment such as is found in Turkey. There the Muslim religion is firmly established but there is a degree of religious freedom. But regretfully he said, "Until now no one has thought to try that."⁵⁰ As Fisher explains, "Ahmadis claim that they have both perfect religion and perfect statecraft."⁵¹ But in Kababir and in Israel the political situation is not that of perfection. The Ahmadiyya have chosen therefore to be neutral and self-reliant. Perfection for them lies ultimately in the realm of the spirit which for Chuliam Ahmad is the "Life and essence." And from their position of neutrality they are able to encourage the orthodox Muslims to make the best of the situation in which they find themselves in Israel.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Fisher, Ahmadiyyah, p. 79.

Relations with Non-Ahmadiyya

In Israel the religious communities generally leave each other free to practice their religion, as long as the status quo is maintained, that is, as long as men practice their faith within their inherited religious communities as Jews, Muslims, or Christians.

Outwardly the Ahmadiyya fit into this system of millets, and maintain their separate identity. Their relations with the orthodox Muslims and Christians are described as "love and good relations" and with the Jews as "tolerance -- no interference".⁵²

But the Ahmadiyya faith is an evangelistic faith. It has as its objective the winning of Muslims to the "true Islam". Below the surface of social politeness, there is a natural tension between the Ahmadiyya group and the larger orthodox Muslim community.

This writer has heard of a case in which an orthodox Muslim from Gaza was converted to the Ahmadiyya faith. The orthodox Muslims of Gaza reacted by excommunicating the man from the orthodox mosque, probably because of the refusal of the Ahmadiyya to pray with a non-Ahmadiyya Imam. Pressure was placed on the man from the community and he lost his job. This is the inevitable reaction to missionary action by the Ahmadiyya in the orthodox Muslim community.

Relations of Ahmadiyya with the Christians of Kababir are primarily on the social and economic level, and seldom on the religious level. Most of the landlords of Kababir are Ahmadiyya and most of their tenants are Christians. This has contributed to a form of social and economic separation.⁵³

⁵²Tabari, Questionnaire, February 10, 1970.

⁵³Ibrahim Sim'an, Letter of February 3, 1970, Haifa, Israel.

⁵⁴This feeling of social superiority held by the Christian Arabs deserves study. The fact that they have acquired more of the dress and social habits of the western world, may contribute to this "superiority". Christian missions from the West usually minister to Christian Arabs, and, therefore, the Christians have benefitted more from education received in mission schools. It is unfortunate that this favoritism has given rise to a subtle feeling of superiority rather than a desire to minister to the needs of their Muslim neighbors. Not all the benefits of western culture are positive, though, as has been seen in the lack of discipline among Christian students in the boarding school at the Baptist Center, Petach Tikvah, Israel. Muslim students tend to have more respect for authority and are more appreciative of the educational services rendered to them. This may be due to the close-knit family structure maintained in most Muslim homes, as opposed to the greater freedom in Christian homes.

The Arab Christians of Israel consider themselves more socially developed than their Muslim neighbors which adds to the degree of separation.⁵⁴ Added to this is the factor that orthodox Muslims in Kababir have felt more at ease socially with the Christians than with the Ahmadiyya. The orthodox Muslims consider Ahmadiyyat a heresy and perhaps feel the subtle pressures that the Ahmadiyya exert upon them to convert them to their faith. As a result of these subtle pressures, walls of separation have existed, even within such a small community as Kababir.

BAPTIST PRESENCE IN AN AHMADIYYA COMMUNITY

CHAPTER III

Introduction: Need and Invitation

Sheikh Bashir had expressed the need for a Christian teacher for the Christian minority during the interview with the staff of

the Al-Jama'ah magazine in 1966. The Baptists who were

interviewing the Sheikh for the magazine asked if there would be any objection to the coming of a Baptist teacher to organize a Sabbath or Sunday school for the Christian children. The Sheikh answered,

"We have no objection because we love freedom and tolerance and we do not love hatred and suppression."¹

The invitation of the Ahmadiyya Sheikh was accentuated by the complaints of the Christian parents that their children had no option but to attend the Ahmadiyya school, and to be influenced by

Ahmadiyya teaching. One parent expressed his apprehension at the lack of any Christian teaching with the following account, "When our children want us to believe what they say, they swear by the Qur'an or the Prophet!"²

Having engaged in numerous religious discussions with Christians in the Galilee villages, the writer has detected that the faith of some younger Christian Arabs is definitely influenced by their living as a

¹ Sheikh Bashir, Al-Jama'ah, September-October 1966, p. 7.

² I. Sim'an, Letter, February 3, 1970.

minority in the midst of a Muslim majority, and their beliefs tend sometimes to be more Muslim than Christian. The Qur'anic account of Jesus life is more prominent in their thinking than the Gospel accounts. The lack of a vital Christian Church in many villages and the existence of a Muslim majority in teaching positions in some of the village schools are probable reasons.

The Christians of Kababir were cut off from their former religious leadership for particular reasons. Some of them had married for "love" against the wills of their parents and their social mores. Therefore, they had been rejected by their families and their relations with the local priest and the Church in their former villages had been strained. Such marriages in Arabic are called *khatfa* signifying a sudden, impulsive act, which is contrary to the long engagement process practiced in Arab communities. Kababir has become a refuge for such couples.

The only religious life for the Christian families of Kababir has been provided by a once-a-year visit by the priests of the various Catholic and Orthodox Churches during the Christmas or Easter season. These visits which must be made to hundreds of families are naturally short and do not provide much spiritual benefit. Most Arab Christians had not been trained by their churches to engage in Bible study and private devotions, and were heavily dependent on a priest to lead worship. When a Christian died in Kababir it was necessary for a friend or a family member to make the trip down to Hafia to arrange for a priest to conduct the funeral. Usually more time lapsed before the burial than was suitable. In the Middle East burial usually takes place within twenty-four hours of death. Because there was no church in the village, all marriages and baptisms had to be held outside the village.