

ABSTRACT

KABABIR, AN AHMADIYYA COMMUNITY IN ISRAEL

by

Ray G. Register, Jr.

1970

The purpose of this thesis is to describe an Ahmadiyya Muslim community in Israel where Ahmadiyya beliefs have been applied and adapted to meet the needs of Israeli Arabs.

Chapter I is devoted to a short history of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam. The life and claims of the founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, are presented in the setting of the religious reforms of late 19th century India. The establishment of the Ahmadiyya Society upon his death and its development into a world-wide missionary movement under the leadership of the Khalifa is traced.

Chapter II describes Kababir, an Arab village on Mount Carmel, in Haifa, Israel. A majority of the Muslims in Kababir converted to Ahmadiyyat in 1930 under the influence of a missionary from India. Their religious, educational, and social life is strongly influenced by their adherence to the Ahmadiyya faith, and this fact has resulted in a marked advance in religious observance and literacy over that of the Muslim population of Israel in general. The Ahmadiyya are financially independent and have a positive neutral stance in the current Israeli-Arab conflict, partly due to their teaching of peaceful jihad. Their relation with non-Ahmadiyya Arabs of Kababir has been one of non-involvement on the social level, but they have shown concern for religious freedom and the spiritual welfare of the orthodox Muslim and Christian minority.

Chapter III deals with the establishment of a Baptist Center in Kababir to minister to the Arab Christian minority of the village. After an Arab Baptist layman moved to Kababir and began home Bible studies and worship services, social contacts were developed that resulted in the breaking down of barriers between Christians and Ahmadiyya. The Baptist Center was opened with the aid of orthodox Muslim and Ahmadiyya friends, and relations between Baptists and the Ahmadiyya developed on the basis of shared experiences as minorities under religious persecution and a common concern for the promulgation of their respective faiths to other Christians and Muslims. The Ahmadiyya did not feel threatened by the Baptist presence because few Muslims in the area have ever converted to Christianity. The teachings of Ghulam Ahmad gave the Muslims of India answers to the challenge of Christian Missions and inspired them to develop a world-wide missionary movement, often strongly polemical in tone and approach. In the local expression of this movement in Kababir the polemical stance toward Christianity has been tempered by the millet system, and the presence of the Baptists has created a unique opportunity for a positive Christian-Muslim dialogue.

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Ray Gustava Register, Jr., elder son of Ray Gustava Register and Betty Brough Register, was born in 1935 in Columbia, South Carolina. He attended municipal primary schools in Spartanburg, South Carolina, and Charlotte, North Carolina, and completed his secondary education at the West Mecklenburg High School in 1953. He participated in the youth activities of local Baptist and Methodist churches and was active in the 4-H Club and Explorer Scouts, receiving the Eagle Scout Award. While a student at the University of Virginia he held offices in the Baptist Student Union and was licensed to preach in 1956. He graduated Bachelor of Science in Commerce from the University of Virginia in 1957 and was commissioned a line officer in the United States Navy. On June 10, 1957 he married Rose Mary Rich, elder daughter of Lt. Commander Charles Rich and Mary Emma Rich. Following two years of Naval service he entered the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary at Wake Forest, North Carolina, and graduated Bachelor of Divinity in 1962. He was ordained to the Baptist Ministry in 1960 and served as pastor of the Whitakers Baptist Church in Whitakers, North Carolina, until 1964. In May 1964 he was appointed as a Southern Baptist Representative to Israel and studied Arabic and Islamic studies in Haifa, Israel, in 1965 he moved to Nazareth, Israel, and served as Baptist Representative to the Arab villages in the Galilee. He returned to Hartford in 1969 as a student in History of Religions - Islamic and Arabic, at the Hartford Seminary Foundation.

PREFACE

This thesis is the result of observations made during four years of field work as a Baptist Representative in the Arab villages of Israel. These observations have been clarified and expanded by information gained from Arab friends in the village of Kababir and from an article in the Baptist magazine, Al-Jama'ah, by Dr. Dwight L. Baker, a graduate of The Hartford Seminary Foundation, and a missionary colleague. With regard to the translation of Arabic words into English the system applied in The Muslim World has been used, except where direct quotations are made from other sources.

It was my privilege to assist Mr. Ibrahim Sim'an in the establishing of the Baptist Center in Kababir and I am indebted to him for the personal experiences he has shared. Deep indebtedness is acknowledged to Mr. Waqdi Tabari of Kababir, who rendered invaluable aid during my field work in Kababir and in subsequent questionnaires. Also helpful clarifications were received from Mr. 'Abdullah Odeh, the Secretary of the 'Ahmadiyya Mosque in Kababir. I am grateful for the patient advice of Dr. William A. Bigfield, Academic Dean of the Hartford Seminary Foundation, who served as my faculty advisor for this thesis. I also received helpful clarification on the religious life of India from Dr. Charles W. Ranson, Professor of Theology and Eccumenics, and former missionary to India.

Acknowledgement is due to many others, especially to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and to my wife and family who made possible the time and resources for study and research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

69	BIBLIOGRAPHY
67	CONCLUSIONS
	Introduction: Need and Invitation (49)--Moving of Lay Evangelist to Kababir (51)--Early Meetings (53)--Establishing Social Rapport (54)--Baptist Center Established (56)--Relations with the Ahmadiyya (62)--Similarities Between The Baptists and the Ahmadiyya (64).
49	III. BAPTIST PRESENCE IN AN AHMADIYYA COMMUNITY
	Introduction (19)--Physical Setting (20)--History of Ahmadiyya Faith in Kababir (23)--Religious Life of Ahmadiyyas (24)--Education (29)--Social Life (33)--Economic Aspects (40)--Civic Affairs and Political Life (42)--Relations with Non-Ahmadiyya (47).
19	II. KABABIR, AN AHMADIYYA COMMUNITY IN ISRAEL
	Introduction (1)--The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement (2)--Distinctive Teachings (6)--Death of Ghulam Ahmad and Establishment of Society (13)-- Division and Expansion (15).
1	I. THE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT IN ISLAM, A SHORT HISTORY
	CHAPTER
ii	PREFACE
	VITA

CHAPTER I
THE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT IN ISLAM
A SHORT HISTORY

Introduction

The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam had its beginning in Northern India during a period of religious reform in the nineteenth century. The ancient religions of India were reacting to the reform movements begun under the influence of British rule and the subsequent Protestant missionary movement. Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam were shaken by the inroads of western rationalistic thought. Each experienced reformations of great magnitude which tended to alter the social, political, and religious life of their people. Christian missionary education and oriental scholarship were the chief contributors to these changes.

As a result of these reformations there arose, within each religion, leaders who sought to lead their people back to the foundations of their respective faiths. J. N. Farquhar, in Modern Religious Movements in India, lists eleven counter-reformation movements in India during the nineteenth century.¹ Notable among these counter-reformation movements was the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam.

¹ J. N. Farquhar, Modern Religious Movements in India (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1915), pp. 101-185.

The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement

The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam was founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, India, on March 4, 1889 when he announced that he had received a divine revelation giving him the right to accept bay'at (i. e., homage paid to a king or a religious leader) from a disciple. In 1891 he announced that he was the promised Messiah who had returned in the Spirit of Jesus and the Mahdi (Arabic: 'the guided one') expected by the Muslims. He succeeded in gathering a small group of disciples but at the same time aroused the open opposition of orthodox Muslims who refused to accept his claims.²

On November 1, 1904 he announced publicly that he was the buruz (Arabic: Spiritual manifestation) or the avatar (Hindu: incarnation) of Krishna. This brought upon him the open opposition of the Arya Samaj, a counter-reform movement of the Hindus.³

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was born on June 18, 1839 in the village of Qadian in the Gurdaspur District of Punjab, India (commonly known as Kashmir).⁴ "Mirza" was a title of Mogul ancestry. Ghulam Ahmad means "Servant of God" in the Urdu language. His father was loyal to the British government in the Mutiny of 1857 and had encouraged his son to study law in preparation for government service. He studied under an Arabic scholar as a teenager for seven years. His father obtained employment for him in his late teens in the office of the Deputy Commissioner in Sialkot. It was there that he entered into religious discussions with Presbyterian missionaries of the Church of Scotland. These discussions undoubtedly influenced his later

²H. A. Walter, The Ahmadiyya Movement (London: Oxford University Press, 1918), p. 16.

³Walter, The Ahmadiyya Movement, pp. 50-51.

⁴Various writers date his birth from 1835 to 1839, the consensus being 1839.

thought and methods. Following the death of his father in 1876 he turned to an intense study of the Qur'an, the Hadith, and the beliefs of other religions.⁵ He became an ardent Muslim who longed for the regeneration of Islam.⁶

His detachment from worldly affairs and propensity to seeing visions and hearing voices grew, until in 1880 he published the Barahim-i-Ahmadiyya (Ahmadiyya Proofs) which formed the basis for his later teachings and frequent disputes with orthodox Muslims. His writings were filled with the defence of his claims and a polemic against what he felt to be a decadent western Christianity and a degenerate orthodox Islam. In 1892 he began the publication of the monthly magazine, The Review of Religions, in which he carried on a continual polemic with Christianity, orthodox Islam, and Hinduism, and expounded his claims.⁷

His controversial popularity grew until finally he had the opportunity to present the Ahmadiyya views about the Qur'an and Muslim theology at the Conference of Religions in Lahore in 1896, in a paper entitled "The Sources of Divine Knowledge." The paper was later published under the title of The Teachings of Islam.⁸

⁵ Walter, The Ahmadiyya Movement, p. 14.

⁶ James Robson, The Ahmadis, Religion in the Middle East A. J. Arberry, General Editor, (Cambridge University Press, 1969) II, 349 ff.

⁷ The Review of Religions, published by M. Masud Ahmad for the Anjuman-i-Ahmadiyya, Rabwah, West Pakistan (from 1892 to present).
⁸ Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, The Teachings of Islam (London: Luzac & Co., 1910) Republished as The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam (Rabwah, West Pakistan, 1959).

In all of his writings he claimed divine revelation from God:

I would be guilty of an injustice were I to conceal the

fact that I have been raised to this spiritual eminence.

Almighty God has favored me with his certain Word and has

chosen me that I may give sight to the blind, lead seekers

after truth to the object of their search, and give to the

acceptors of truth the glad tidings of the pure fountain which

is talked of by many but discovered by few.⁹

He remained continually abreast to any new theological changes

in other religions and often used the arguments of rationalistic

scholars in his polemic against Christianity. His followers were to

use the writings of Jewish and Christian scholars, who employed

the historical-critical method of biblical research to support the

Ahmadīya claim that the Bible as it exists today had been corrupted

by the Jews and Christians in the transmission of the text.

Ghulam Ahmad often challenged Christian missionaries, Muslims,

and Arya Samaj leaders to debates and 'prayer duels':

He (Ahmad) has announced that whoever would pray for

his death would himself fall a prey to a speedy and painful

death, and that such a person would die before he dies.¹⁰

The Christians refused to pray for his death, but his challenge was

accepted by others. This led to an unfortunate event. Ghulam Ahmad

had predicted the death of Pandit Lekh Ram, a leading opponent from

the Hindu Arya Samaj. When Pandit Lekh Ram was fatally stabbed by

an assassin following the Moslem Id, the Arya Samaj and others

accused Ghulam Ahmad of involvement in the murder. Through the

⁹Ghulam Ahmad, *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*, p. 184.

¹⁰*The Review of Religions*, (hereafter R. R.) V, 459, (Walter, Ahmadīya, p. 45).

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Walter, Ahmadia, pp. 43-44.

Influence of his leading Muslim opponent, Maulvi Muhammad Hussein,
a government order was issued on February 24, 1899 constraining
Ghulam Ahmad from publishing any further predictions of anyone's
death or disgrace. 11

The distinctive teachings of Ghulam Ahmad deserve special consideration in an attempt to better understand the vitality and attitudes of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam.

As 'Promised Messiah' he taught that:

Jesus and I are one in essence . . . It is for this reason that my advent is his advent. He who denies me denies Jesus also . . .¹²

My superiority lies in being the Messiah of Muhammad¹³

as Jesus was the Messiah of Moses, the Israelite Law giver.

The Jesus he personified was the Jesus of the Qur'an and not

the Jesus of the Gospel. The Jesus of the Gospels was guilty of

cowardice, blasphemy, false claims, questionable conduct with women, and failure.¹⁴ Rather the Jesus with whom he was 'one in essence'

was described in the following way:

Jesus Christ had imparted pure and simple teachings to

his disciples in shape of Injil, which was deliberately cor-

rupted by his subsequent so-called followers to such an extent

that the present God of Christians can in no way be identified

with the God of the Son of Mary.¹⁵

¹² R. R., I. 340 (Walter, Ahmadiyya, p. 33)

¹³ R. R., I. 206 (Walter, Ahmadiyya, p. 33)

¹⁴ Note: Muslim objections to Jesus are normally limited to the Quranic rejection of his Sonship, the doctrine of the Trinity and the crucifixion. Except for a few exceptions Muslims generally have a high regard for the moral life of Jesus.

¹⁵ Walter, Ahmadiyya, p. 80.

In a special revelation he claimed to have discovered that the

tomb of 'Yus Asaph' in Srinagar, Kashmir, India was indeed the tomb of Jesus. Therefore he claimed that Jesus did not die on the cross

but was taken down from the cross in a state of swoon, and healed in the tomb by the application of the mysterious Marham-i-Isa

(ointment of Jesus). He arose, disguised as a gardener, met with his disciples and fled after forty days through Damascus, where he converted Saul and Ananias. Later the Ahmadiyya have claimed that the

Essenes were involved in his escape and were the angels described in the Gospels. Jesus proceeded on to Kashmir, where he searched for

the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, and died at the age of 120. 'Yus Asaph' was a corruption of his title, 'Jesus the Gatherer.' Therefore

Ghulam Ahmad called on Christians to forsake the theory of blood atonement and the bodily second coming of Jesus, since he, Ghulam

Ahmad has appeared in the Spirit of Jesus.¹⁶ These claims about the death of Jesus did not succeed in winning

over great numbers of Christians to the Ahmadiyya Movement. But they did give Muslims an answer to the arguments of Christian

missionaries who claimed that Muslims worshipped a dead Prophet, whereas Christians had a living Lord who had conquered over death.

Ghulam Ahmad taught that the Christian Church was corrupted as a result of the theory of redemption propagated by the Apostle Paul.

Neither he nor his followers distinguished between the Christian Church and western culture and both are equated in most Ahmadiyya

publications.

¹⁶ See the statement on "The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam"

inside the cover of recent issues of The Review of Religions. The

most complete description of the Ahmadiyya theory on the death of Jesus

is by J. D. Shams, Where Did Jesus Die? (Rabwah, West Pakistan: Al-Shirkat-UI-Islamia Limited, sixth edition, June, 1965).

He spoke of the Trinity as being a 'pidgeon'.¹⁷ This was an

obvious reference to the Spirit's appearance at the baptism of Jesus and a rebuke to the futile attempts of Christian missionaries to argue with Muslims about the doctrine of the Trinity.

Christian missionaries are referred to as representing Dajjal

(the Anti-Christ). In an indirect tribute to the success of the Christian

missionaries of his day he said:

They (Christian missionaries) have spread all over the

world like locusts . . . There is no ear but has heard their voice,

no eye but has read their mischief-spreading writings . . .

Immense is the loss that Islam has suffered at their hands . . .

Now thousands of Muslims have gone over to Christianity . . .

The Holy Prophet said that 70,000 Muslims shall follow Dajjal.

This prophecy too has been more than fulfilled.¹⁸

Ghulam Ahmad's claims relating to Islam are equally provocative.

As the Burur ("re-appearance") of Muhammad he said that:

The wise and knowing God has raised Mirza Ghulam Ahmad

of Qadian with the same spirit and power, the same blessings

and favours, and the same miracles, with which he raised the

Holy Prophet.¹⁹

Though the Ahmadis are careful to guard the finality of the Prophet

Muhammad, they maintain that the door of inspiration is still open:

¹⁷R. R., I, 280 (Walter, Ahmadis, p. 95).

¹⁸R. R., IV, 434-435 (Walter, Ahmadis, p. 97).

¹⁹R. R., I, 333 (Walter, Ahmadis, p. 37).

The door of inspiration has always been and will always be open, and no attribute of God ever became useless.²⁰

These statements were essential to justify the many predictions and new interpretations of the Qur'an made by Ghulam Ahmad and his followers.

As the Mahdi he claimed that the Jihad (Holy War) was a

spiritual struggle, involving prayer, witnessing, and missionary

expansion. His conception of Jihad was radically different from the

orthodox tradition of military struggle against the enemies of Islam.

The orthodox Muslims objected most to this claim as they saw it as an

acquiescence to British rule in India. Ghulam Ahmad advocated, there-

fore, that his followers not become involved in political matters.

He called for a return to the purity of early Islam, and to

Muhammad who was "true Savior, an Intercessor, a miracle worker,

and a perfect manifestation of the Divine Being."²¹ He said that even

a savage could progress to "union with and the love of God" through

proper spiritual education.²² And he recommended polygamy as the

Qur'anic solution to the western innovation of prostitution.

Heaven and hell were to Ghulam Ahmad spiritual realities and

not physical:

Whatever the good men enjoy spiritually in this life are

really blessings not of this but of the next life.²³

²⁰From the "Articles of Faith of the Ahmadiyya Community",
Walter, Ahmadiyya, p. 37).

²¹Walter, Ahmadiyya, p. 53.

²²Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, The Teachings of Islam, pp. 19-20.

²³R. R., II, 127.

In the intermediate stage between death and the resurrection, called Barzakh, man will be given a new spiritual body which will be "bright or dark according to the good or bad actions which a man performs . . ." in this life.²⁴ In the third stage, on the resurrection day, reward will be given and all will enter an endless Paradise. "In short, heaven and hell, according to the Holy Qur'an, are images and representations of man's own spiritual life in this world . . ."²⁵ His comments on the spiritual life of the Muslim community of his day reveal the cause that led him to call his followers to a more holy life:

I have come at a time when the Muhammadan society has like the Jewish, been rotten to the core, and spiritually, which is the life and essence, having departed, nothing has remained in the hands of Muslims but the husk of lifeless ceremonies . . .²⁶

He had much the same attitude and accusations toward the maulvis of his day as Jesus did toward the Pharisees of New Testament times. Insight may be gained into Chuliam Ahmad's attitude toward his opponents by viewing the tactics of the Hindu Arya Samaj. Its leader, Dayananda, frequently used taunts and criticisms which inevitably aroused the opposition of Muslims, Christians, and other Hindu leaders: Dayananda's own methods of controversy, shown in his public addresses and debates and also in his writings, have naturally been adopted by his followers. Wherever they go, one hears slander, passion, and unfair methods; and disturbances in the streets and squares have been pitifully common.²⁷

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- ²⁴Mirza Chuliam Ahmad, Teachings, pp. 131-136.
²⁵Mirza Chuliam Ahmad, Teachings, p. 142.
²⁶R. H. III, p. 399 (Walker, Ahmediya p. 68).
²⁷Rarguhar, Modern . . . Movement . . ., p. 122.
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The Muslims used a similar approach in their attacks on Ghulam Ahmad. This was observed by Dr. Griswold, a Christian missionary and contemporary of Ghulam Ahmad:

In the numerous fatwas, which Muhammadan Associations all over India have issued against the Mirza Sahib, the strongest words of denunciation are used. Thus he is called Kafir, 'unbeliever', Dajjal 'Anti Christ', muthid 'heretic', murtadd 'apostate', Kazgab 'liar', be-iman 'faithless', dag habaz 'deceitful', etc., etc. With such epithets as these is the 'certificate' filled, with which Muhammadan orthodoxy has dismissed the Mirza Sahib from its fellowship and service. It is not surprising then, that Ghulam Ahmad responded in kind to such attacks, and used methods that were common to other religious leaders of his age and culture.

The claims of Ghulam Ahmad to fulfill in himself the prophecies of the various religions of his area were undoubtedly influenced by the atmosphere of syncretism which dominated religious thought in India and parts of Asia during the period. The Ahmadiyya Movement went beyond the bounds of the Qur'an in its claim to unite all religions in the "True Islam". In a pamphlet published by the Ahmadiyyas, the following answer is given to the question, "What is Islam?":

28 Dr. Griswold, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, The Mehdi: Messiah of Qadian (Lodiana: American Tract Society, 1902), pp. 26-27.
Farguhar, Modern ... Movements ... p. 147).

3. Islam requires belief in all the prophets and spiritual

guides including Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Krishna, Buddha,

Confucius, and Zoroaster. Islam represents the completion

of the mission of all the prophets from the earliest dawn of

history: That in fact all the prophets of God came with one and

the same mission. Thus Islam establishes peace between all

religions.²⁹

It is interesting to note that similar claims to unite the religions of

the world were made by the Baha'i Faith which arose among Shiite

Muslims in neighboring Persia (Iran) during the mid-nineteenth century.³⁰

The Baha'is now have their world headquarters in Haifa, Israel, where

we will meet the Ahmadiyya of Kababir in Chapter II of this study.

²⁹Surti M. R. Benglee, M. A. The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, (Chicago: The Moslem Sunrise Press, c. 1940), p. 3.

³⁰See C. J. Adams, "Baha'i Faith", Encyclopedia Britannica, 1969, II, 1038 and A. Bansaani, "Baha'is", Encyclopedia of Islam, I, 915 ff.

The Ahmadi's have classified the Baha'is among the Dajjal along with Christian missionaries. See Fisher, Ahmadiyyah p. 146.

Death of Chuliam Ahmad and Establishment of The Society

Chuliam Ahmad published his will on December 24, 1905. In it he said that it had been revealed to him that he would die soon. He directed that new members should be admitted to the Movement by the righteous among his followers. He had formerly admitted them personally after the *bay'at*. In the will he established the "Sadr Anjuman-i-Ahmadliya" (Chief Ahmadliya Society) to carry on the affairs of the Movement. He advised that disputes should be settled by a majority vote of the Society, and that the Society was to have full authority.³¹ A dispute over the authority of the *Khaliqa*, his successor, in relation to the authority of the Society, led eventually to the division in 1914 between the Qadian and Lahore groups.

Chuliam Ahmad had agreed to present a paper at a religious conference in University Hall, Lahore, in May 1908. While in Lahore he died of an intestinal disorder on May 26, 1908. His paper entitled "The Message of Peace" revealed that he was able to partially soften his polemical attitude. The following words were read by his followers Khawajah Kamal-ud-Din:

That religion does not deserve the name of religion which does not inculcate broad sympathy with humanity in general.

nor does that person deserve to be called a human being who has not a sympathetic soul within him.³²

He was buried in Qadian and his tomb became a place of pilgrimage for many of his followers.

³¹Robson, *The Ahmadis, Religion in the M. E.*, II, 354.

³²Mirza Chuliam Ahmad, *The Message of Peace*, (Walter, p. 24).

It has been difficult for non-Ahmadis to sympathetically assess the character and claims of Ghulam Ahmad, because of the polemical nature of his writings. But the following statement may be considered as a fair judgement of his personality. It is made by H. A. Walter in The Ahmadiya Movement:

It is difficult for one who knows Ahmad only through his

writings to appraise his character. That he was a man of simple habits and generous impulses all the evidence at our disposal would indicate. His courage in the face of bitter persecution, amounting to attempts at physical violence, is certainly commendable. Only a man of magnetic and pleasing personality could

have attracted and held the friendship and loyalty of such numbers of men, of who two, at least, died for their faith in Afghanistan, in accordance with orthodox Musalman law. Those older Ahmadis whom I have questioned as to their reasons for joining the move-

ment have most of them laid great stress on the personal impression made upon them by the Mirza Sahib's forceful and winning personality than on the nature of his peculiar teachings

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Mawlā Nūr al-Dīn was elected as the first khalīfah (successor)

of Mirzā Ghulam Ahmad and became the leader of the newly formed
Chief Ahmadiyya Society. Discontent grew among those who con-

tested the power of the khalīfah. This minority group believed that

the Society (Anjuman) should have the ultimate power in guiding the

movement. They also objected to calling non-Ahmadiyya kāfir

(unbelievers). When the first khalīfah died in 1914, it became apparent

that Bashir al-Dīn Mahmūd Ahmad, the son of Ghulam Ahmad,

would be elected by the majority of believers as the new khalīfah.

Most of the executive committee and a westernized minority seceded

under the leadership of Khwājah Kamāl al-Dīn and Muḥammad Aḥ.

They left Qadian and established a new society in Lahore, called the

"Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at-i Islam" (Ahmadiyya Society for the

Propagation of Islam).

The Lahore group held that Ghulam Ahmad was only a mudjadid

(reformer), and not a prophet.³⁴ They became more deeply involved in

political matters than the Qadian group. They promote a modernized

version of orthodox Islam. The name of Ghulam Ahmad is seldom

mentioned in their monthly publication The Islamic Review and Arab

Affairs, which is published in Woking, England.

The Qadian group, led by Bashir al-Dīn, the new khalīfah, was

organized into a vital educational and missionary group. They claimed

the allegiance of over ninety per cent of the members of the movement

following the division.³⁵ Ten years after he assumed office as khalīfah

³⁴ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Ahmadiyya", Encyclopedia of Islam

(Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), I, 302.

³⁵ Sir Muhammad Zafarullah Khan, The Head of the Ahmadiyya

Movement, p. 9.

he restructured the organization of the Chief Ahmadiyya Society to put

the group on a sound financial basis. Each member contributes a minimum of 6-1/4 per cent of his income to the movement, although most active members give from 10 per cent to 33 per cent. He set up a judicial system and a Womens Association. Qadian was noted for having the highest literacy rate among women of any town in India. Several high schools and colleges were also established.³⁶

Missionary work of the Qadian group established Ahmadiyya

communities in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), Malaya, Burma, Ceylon, Mauritius, the British Colonies of West Africa and former French territories (Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Gambia), East Africa, Egypt, Palestine (Israel), Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan. Missionary work is carried on by professional missionaries and lay-men alike. In later years the Ahmadiyya became active in Europe, the United States, and Argentina. Their mission methods are much similar to that of Christian Protestant missions in the use of literature,

education, and relief work. During the depression years Bashir al-Din instituted the Tahrik-i-Insani (The New Scheme) calling on his followers to abstain from all luxuries and to intensify their efforts in missionary work.

He was the author of many books, chief among them, Ahmadīyat or the True Islam.³⁷ Also he wrote a lengthy commentary on the Qur'an, Tafsir-i-Kabir, in Urdu.³⁸

The vitality of the Qadian group has been attributed to four factors: the memory of the founder, reverence for the present head,

³⁶Ibid, pp. 10 ff.

³⁷Bashiruddin Ahmad, Ahmadīyat or the True Islam, (Qadian, Punjab, 1937).

³⁸Presently being translated into English.

doctrine, and the intensity of corporate life.³⁹

The Qadian community was radically affected by the partition of Pakistan in 1947. They were forced with other Muslims to move

en masse to a new location in the Pakistan side. The Ahmadis

built a new city southwest of Lahore, called Rabwah (Height).

Both Qadian, or Rabwah, and Lahore Ahmadis found them-

selves the victims of the Punjab riots of 1953, as the orthodox

Muslims did not distinguish between them. Zafar-Allah Khan, a

leading politician and an Ahmadi, had been severely criticized by

other Muslims when he refused to attend the funeral of Mr. Jinnah

in 1948. He claimed as his reason that the leader of the funeral

prayers had publicly called the Ahmadis Kafirun (infidels) and

murtadd (apostates).⁴⁰ Orthodox Muslims agitated for the expulsion

of Zafar-Allah Khan from the office of foreign minister of Pakistan,

and for the exclusion of all of the Ahmadis from Muslim citizen-

ship in Pakistan. When the Pakistani government refused to bow to

their demands, riots and bloodshed broke out in Lahore against the

Ahmadis.⁴¹ Martial law was declared but the situation eventually

resulted in the overthrow of the government. It appears that the

Ahmadis were used as the object of the people's disenchantment

with the government.

In Rabwah there is a missionary training college. Also young

men's and young women's organizations have been created to encourage

lay interest in the work of the Ahmadiyya Movement. The Review of

Religions continues to be published monthly. It is designed mainly for

³⁹Smith, Encyclopaedia of Islam, I, 302.

⁴⁰Robson, The Ahmadis, Religion in the M. E., II, 355.

⁴¹Aziz Ahmad, Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan 1857-1964, (London: Oxford, 1967), pp. 240-241

an English speaking audience. It carries on a continued polemic with the Lahore group. Also it endeavors to undermine faith in Christianity and to establish the claims of Chulam Ahmad and the Ahmadiyya Movement.⁴²

An annual conference is held at Rabwah in the last week of December and has become for some of the Ahmadiyya a form of pilgrimage. The number of the Ahmadiyya in Pakistan was estimated in 1954 to be approximately two million, with an additional fifty thousand in mission areas, mainly in West Africa.⁴³ According to the most recent calculations the Ahmadiyya fellowship numbers two and a half million. Their work in West Africa is strongly resisted by orthodox Muslims and the missionaries from the Islamic Mission of the United Arab Republic.⁴⁴

Bashir al-Din died on November 8, 1965. He was succeeded as *khalifa* of the Rabwah group by his son, Habib Mirza Nasir Ahmad.⁴⁵

⁴² A study of articles published in *The Review of Religions* on the subject of Christianity, made by this writer reveals little change in the historic polemical approach of the Qadian (Rabwah) group. This study included all issues of the magazine published in the last five years, 1965-1969.

⁴³ Robson, "Ahmadis," *Religions in M. E.*, II, 360.

⁴⁴ This information was received in an interview with Sheikh Ushai Bashir, Kababir, Israel, by Dr. Dwight Baker, for *Al-Jama'ah* (Arabic) September - October 1966. *Al-Jama'ah* is the official magazine of the Baptist Convention in Israel for Arabic readers.

⁴⁵ Robson, "Ahmadis," *Religions in M. E.*, II, 360.

Kababir is the only Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Israel and the area formerly known as Palestine. It is one of the few Ahmadiyya communities in the Middle East. As all missionary groups attempting to gain a foothold in the area, Ahmadiyyat has found the way difficult in the face of the traditional religions. Kababir offers a unique opportunity to study the effect of the Ahmadiyya faith upon Arab Muslims who live as a minority in a land that has become a Jewish state. In reality, the Ahmadiyya of Kababir are a minority within a larger minority because the orthodox Muslims are a minority in Israel. And the Ahmadiyya comprise but a small fraction of the Muslim community in Israel.

Kababir offers also the opportunity to observe the religious, social, and economic inter-relations of the Ahmadiyya, the orthodox Muslims, and the Christian Arabs, who live in Kababir, in the midst of a Jewish society.

The very nature of religious life in the Middle East has limited the expression of the Ahmadiyya faith in Kababir, and has restricted its propagation to orthodox Muslims exclusively. But despite this limitation it will be seen in this study that the Ahmadiyya faith has attained a level of religious devotion that is singular in the area.

Introduction

KABABIR, AN AHMADIYYA COMMUNITY IN ISRAEL

CHAPTER II

Physical Setting

Kababir is located high on Mount Carmel within the limits of the modern port city of Haifa, Israel. The Carmel Mountain Range begins about twenty miles south of Haifa. It continues north until it extends almost into the ocean at Haifa and turns east into the valley of Israel. The promontories of Mount Carmel line the Mediterranean coast south of Haifa. The tiny white mosque of Kababir can be seen atop one of these promontories about three miles south of Haifa. On adjacent hills can be seen the modern Israeli apartment houses that have been built in recent years.

The drive up to Kababir through Haifa is a lesson in comparative religions. At the point of Mount Carmel which literally juts out into the sea is Elijah's Cave where the faithful of the Christian, Muslim, Druze, and Jewish faith make annual pilgrimages in hope of healing. The golden dome of the Baha'i Temple dominates the landscape.¹ It is necessary to pass near Wadi Nis Nas, a large Arab quarter, where the Greek Catholic Church is located. Further up the hill is Saint Luke's Protestant Compound, and just above it is Abbas Street, where Jews and Arabs have lived side by side in relative harmony. At the top of Mount Carmel a breathtaking view of the Galilee and the coastline as far as Lebanon is seen. Then just past the modern shopping center of Merkaz Ha-Carmel (Central Carmel) a single street running through an elite Jewish Community leads out to the promontory on which Kababir is situated, high above the Mediterranean.

¹ Haifa is the world center of the Baha'i Faith. The tomb of Baha Ullah is located outside of Acre, about 20 miles from Haifa.

The single street that leads into Kababir circles inside the village and exits from the same route.² The dwellings of its 750 Arab inhabitants are built along this street. Many houses are built on the edge of the cliffs which slope off steeply into the wadies (valleys) below. The houses vary in size, from the typical one family, flat roofed dwelling to larger two-story, multiple family dwellings. In the past two years, three-story apartment dwellings have been constructed to meet the rising demand for housing of Arabs who are employed in the Haifa area. All of the dwellings are built of poured, reinforced concrete construction.³ Most of the homes in Kababir, as in other Arab villages, are built in stages, as money and time become available for labor and materials. Municipal building codes tend to standardize construction. All multiple family dwellings are required to have bomb shelters because of the current Middle East tension.

Inside the circle of the village is the small Ahmadiyya mosque

and the community mission house, where many of the local events take place. A short distance away is the village primary school and playground. There is only one small grocery store in the village and no industries, as most of the inhabitants are employed outside the village in Haifa and the surrounding industrial complex. Ninety per cent of the land of Kababir is owned by the Arab inhabitants of the village and only ten per cent by Jewish neighbors.⁴ There are several empty plots of land in the village on which additional housing may be built. Kababir

² According to Abdullah Odeh in a questionnaire on February 22, 1970, this is due to city planning. (Mr. Odeh is the Secretary of the Ahmadiyya Mosque in Kababir.)

³ Because of the scarcity of wood, concrete and stone are the most popular construction materials in the Middle East.

⁴ Abdullah Odeh, Questionnaire, February 22, 1970, Kababir, Haifa, Israel.

appears to have more space available to its inhabitants than most Arab

villages.

Kababir shares with the surrounding suburbs a beautiful view of

the Mediterranean coastline and a mild climate. The temperature on

Mount Carmel tends to be several degrees lower than the surrounding

coastline.

The population of Kababir is 600 Ahmadis, 50 orthodox Muslims, and 100 Christians.⁵

The existence of the Ahmadiyya faith in Kababir is a testimony to the evangelistic fervor of the Ahmadiyya Movement in the face of the opposition of the orthodox Muslim community in the Middle East. Persecution fell upon the Ahmadiyya from the first days of their contact with the Middle East. Sheikh Jalal al-Din Shams was sent from India in 1929 to begin evangelistic work in Damascus. He succeeded in laying the foundation of an Ahmadiyya community. But his work in Damascus was cut short when he was attacked and stabbed as a result of the opposition to his teachings. The wounds were not fatal and he succeeded miraculously in escaping to Haifa.⁶ He began to witness to the Muslims of Kababir.

In a period of three years he was able to win as converts the largest family in Kababir, the Odeh family, who had moved to Kababir from Bethlehem some years earlier.⁷ Other Muslims from various families were also won as Sheikh Jalal al-Din built up the community through preaching and teaching. He gave special attention to teaching the children and the young people the precepts of the Ahmadiyya faith. Many of these have now grown to be the leaders of the community.

⁶ Sheikh Ujahi Bashir, quoted from Dr. Baker, Al-Jama'ah, (Haifa, Israel, September - October 1966), p. 6. Note that this story indicates the stress that the Ahmadiyya place on the miraculous intervention of God.

⁷ Wajdi Tabari, Questionnaire, January 10, 1970, Kababir, Israel.