

THE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT

TWO ARTICLES

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1st January 1976

A Sectional Presentation at the 1976 Evangelical Alliance Conference

(6-9 January 1976 at High Wycombe, England)

“CHRISTIANITY AND THE WORLD OF ISLAM TODAY”

Imagine the disillusionment of a young man and his wife and small children who in 1947 left India for the newly created state of Pakistan – a homeland for Muslims – and who in 1974 found himself and his family declared non-Muslims by the National Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The young man, out of enthusiasm for the vision of the poet-philosopher Muhammed Iqbal and the political skill of Muhammed Ali Jinnah, came to Pakistan leaving behind much in India. He settled in Lahore. Things went well for him until he found himself caught up in the Punjab riots of 1953.

The disturbances occurred because the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Khwaja Nazim-ud-din, rejected demands by the All Pakistan Muslim Parties Convention held in Karachi in January 1953. The demands were that the Qadiani Ahmadis be declared a non-Muslim minority and that Chaudhri Zafrullah Khan, the Ahmadi Foreign Minister of Pakistan, and other Ahmadis holding key posts in the State, be removed from office.

This was a test case and would set a precedent. What was involved in the acceptance or rejection of the ultimatum would affect the future of the State of Pakistan significantly. *“If Pakistan is to develop as a democratic and progressive State, sectarian activities must be put down with firmness; otherwise Pakistan will become a mediaeval and reactionary State.”* This statement was recorded in a note by Mr. Anwar Ali, DIG, CID (Munir Report p.44). The Munir Report is the short and popular title of the Report of the Court of Enquiry constituted

under the Punjab Act II of 1954 to enquire into the Punjab disturbances of 1953.

Mr Daultana, President of the Punjab Provincial League, was aware of the gravity of the problem as is indicated in his speech on 30th August 1952 in Hazuri Bagh: *“Today Pakistan is the only country in the world which seeks to claim Islamic government. The whole world is watching this experiment, and if we fail in fulfilling this responsibility, the world would have an opportunity to say that there is no room for an Islamic form of government in the world.”* (Munir Report p.97) About minorities he said *“The object of declaring a community or a group as a minority is that not only the rights of that group or minority should be determined, but that such rights should be protected and they should be given concessions in public services and representation in the Legislative Assemblies.”* (Munir Report p.98) In his speech in Rawalpindi he is reported as saying that *“All those people in Pakistan and who are loyal to Pakistan, be they Hindus, Christians or any other sect or religion, come under the protection of the Government of the country and also of the people.”* (Munir Report p.99)

The Court of Enquiry reported that all the ulama whom they questioned about the demands stated that they are a corollary to the Objectives Resolution of March 1949, and to the “religio-political” system which they call Islam. (Munir Report p.186). The Court draws attention to the ideology behind the demands: *“The point which must be clearly comprehended to appreciate the plausibility or otherwise of the demands is that in an Islamic State or, what is the same thing in Islam, there is a fundamental distinction between the rights of Muslim and non-Muslim subjects, and one distinction which may at once be mentioned is that the non-Muslims cannot be associated with the business of administration in the higher sphere. Therefore, if the Ahmadis were not Muslims but kafirs, they could not occupy any of the high offices in the State.”* (Munir Report p.200)

It is not surprising that not only the question of what is an Islamic State came even more to the fore as a result of these disturbances in the Punjab, but also the question which arises from it: “Who is a Muslim?” The ulama questioned by the Court of Inquiry gave varying answers, none of which were

broad enough to include the Ahmadis. The Government was wise enough not to declare the Ahmadis non-Muslims; thus the definition of Muslim was left wide open. Had a definition been made which excluded the Ahmadis, the acceptance of it by the Government would have given the definers superior status. They would then have been able to extend their definition to all matters pertaining to Islam and the State.

The conclusion from the 1953 Ahmadi crisis in Pakistan was that all are Muslims who say they are Muslims. By keeping a wide-open definition of Muslim, by refusing to declare the Ahmadis a non-Muslim minority, Pakistan has kept unity among its Muslim community – they have been prevented from condemning each other.

In 1974 the situation changed. The Ahmadis in Pakistan were very much under suspicion for political plotting with outside powers – they seemed to be natural scapegoats – justly or unjustly. Popular reaction was stirred up and again there were riots throughout the Punjab. Several hundred Ahmadis were killed, their property looted and burned. Traditional Ulama spoke against them, and the matter came up in the provincial and national Assemblies. Finally in early September 1974 all the Ahmadis of Pakistan, whether belonging to the Qadiani or the Lahori parties, were declared a non-Muslim minority. They became the second largest minority in the country – the Christians being the largest. There seemed an irony in this minority association with Christians as they, like Saul of Tarsus, have so opposed the Christian position. This is the time for Christians to show them love, to welcome them in the exile, to tell them they are praying for them. I am personally convinced that this is God's hour for reaching the Ahmadis for Christ. So far, we have seen a few accept Him in Pakistan, but it is the time for a far greater harvest. Some have fled from Pakistan, their chosen homeland. Many have settled in Nigeria – on his visit to Nigeria during 1975 the Bishop of Lahore was asked to send some experienced Christians to work among the Ahmadis in Nigeria. To my knowledge, no-one has yet gone. Some Ahmadis working in Bahrain and some of the Gulf oil states are keeping the fact that they are Ahmadis secret, or they have joined a more orthodox Islamic sect. These people by

their very experiences are spiritually vulnerable. Their faith in Islamic brotherhood has been shaken. They have followed a minority cause with dedication and have found betrayal. They are often well acquainted with the bible as they once sought to repudiate its teaching and to gain converts from the Christian faith.

The Ahmadi movement was started in the Punjab in India in 1890 by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who saw himself as a renewer of Islam. He expounded new doctrines, finding much of his teaching in Muslim predictions about the Mahdi or expected renewer and leader. He used language about himself that suggested he was claiming prophethood. This brought much opposition from orthodox Islam, which states categorically that Muhammed is the last and seal of the prophets. After his death in 1908, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was succeeded by a disciple, but the movement showed signs of division and finally developed into the Qadiani group – the largest group – and the Lahore group. The latter group tried to call the Qadiani group Mirzais or Qadianis, and themselves Ahmadis. However, by popular usage Ahmadi describes both groups and both are included in the Pakistan National Assembly ruling of September 1974. Although this whole history may seem to relate mainly to the sub-continent, it has significance throughout the Muslim world. The Ahmadis have always regarded the whole world as their mission field – Muslim and non-Muslim – and so are to be found in many lands as part of their missionary programme. They are now put on the spot as to their relationship with Islam. Other Ahmadis for economic and other reasons are to be found in the oil lands and the cultural centres of the world – they too are open as never before to the proofs of Christian concern, love and witness.

Intellectual reasons endorsed by the testimony of the Holy Spirit may be convincing that this is God's hour to reach this group of people. May we be like the sons of Issachar who helped establish the Kingdom of David – “Men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do”.

(I Chron. 12 v32)

Here is the crunch: what should we do? Let us not pass up another opportunity by doing nothing.

THE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT

(An article for the magazine “The Life of Faith”)

In a handbook on how to approach Christians, an Ahmadiyya writer stresses firstly the importance of courtesy. Soon the Ahmadis are to spend a million pounds on a new campaign for sharing their beliefs with the world, starting with Londoners. A courteous Ahmadi may well knock at your door and tell you that Jesus Christ died of old age in Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, where his tomb is to be seen today. He will urge you to read the Quran and to believe in Mirza Ghulam Ahmad who founded the Ahmadiyya movement. This movement is very serious in its missionary motive and message, so it is well to know what it claims and how one can give courteous replies.

From its beginning nearly a century ago, the movement has been regarded by orthodox Muslims as very heretical. In very recent years, Qadiani Ahmadis have been pronounced non-Muslims by some Muslim religious bodies and governments. For example, the National Assembly of Pakistan declared them non-Muslims in September 1974. Imagine the disillusionment of a young man and his wife and small children who in 1947 left India for the newly created State of Pakistan – a homeland for Muslims – and who in 1974 found himself and his community declared non-Muslim by the National Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Let us start at the beginning and clarify our terms. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement, was born in the Punjabi village of Qadian, in 1835. He claimed to bring a revelation for the renewal of Islam and to re-interpret it for the demands of a new era. The movement takes its name **Ahmadiyya** from its founder Mirza Ghulam **Ahmad**.

The founder's son succeeded him as the first Khalifa; but after the son's death in 1914 the Ahmadiyya movement split into two. The original branch called the Ahmadis also took the name Qadiani after the birthplace of the founder, Qadian. This major group upheld the founder's claim to be a prophet, while the seceders, known as the Lahore Party, regarded the founder as only a reformer. Both branches are missionary minded. The Lahore party founded the mosque in Woking, while the Qadian/Ahmadis have a mosque headquarters in London. The Qadiani Ahmadis are also known as Mirzais, a name also taken from the founder. It is this group that is the largest and which is launching the evangelistic campaign in London.

The orthodox Muslim takes great exception to the Ahmadiyya teaching that the prophet Muhammed, although "the seal of the prophets", is not the last of the prophets. The Ahmadi agrees that the prophet Muhammed embodies the perfection of prophet hood, but claims that faith is incomplete without regarding Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as the Messiah-Mahdi. He also teaches that Jesus Christ died like the other prophets, and did not ascend bodily into heaven. Orthodox Muslims claim that he did not die, but ascended bodily into heaven and is alive.

The Ahmadi on our doorstep or in our sitting-room will have much to say to us. What shall we say to him or her? He will quote the Bible to us, so we can be ready with some passage of Scripture to study with him. My most recent discussion with an Ahmadi was in February, in Pakistan. We were soon discussing whether or not Jesus died on the cross. From all points of view, this is a central subject. The theme of the three-day international conference in London will be "The Deliverance of Jesus from the Cross". When an Ahmadi seeks to discuss with you, you may tell him that you are a follower of Jesus Christ, and how you came to know Him as a risen Lord, Saviour and God. He cannot call you a liar. Tell him of other witnesses like Saul of Tarsus who persecuted Christians and whom God changed after the sudden revelation on the Damascus highway. Show him what Saul, later called Paul, wrote in his first letter to the Corinthian church. In a famous

passage on the resurrection of Jesus Christ Paul wrote (Ch 15 vv 3-9):

I passed on to you what I received, which is of the greatest importance: that Christ died for our sins, as written in the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised to life three days later, as written in the Scriptures, that he appeared to Peter and then to all twelve apostles. Then he appeared to more than five hundred of his followers at once, most of whom are still alive, although some have died. Then he appeared to James and afterwards to all the Apostles. Last of all he appeared also to me – even though I am like someone whose birth was abnormal. For I am the least of all the apostles – I do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted God’s church. (Good News Bible)

Let us think of

- (1) The event or historical fact of Christ’s death and resurrection
- (2) The record in the Scriptures of his death and resurrection
- (3) The experience of sharing in his death and resurrection which all who in each century who know him as a person describe in their own way.

Firstly, the **event** of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection could not be disproved by his Roman and Jewish enemies. Those who deny the event assume the burden of proof. The book *Who Moved the Stone?* By Frank Morrison, published by Faber, is a good example of how a lawyer set out to disprove the event but in the end was compelled by the evidence to accept it.

Secondly, the **record** of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection is clearly foretold in the Old Testament scriptures (the book of the prophet Isaiah, chapter 53, and Psalm 22, to give two references). It is also clearly narrated in the New Testament scriptures. The Ahmadi may claim that Christians have corrupted or altered the scriptures. Again, the burden of proof rests with him. Give him a Bible and ask him to show that part is changed, and how, when and where. The manuscript evidence for the reliability of the text of Scripture is better than that for the text of the plays of Shakespeare, despite the

fact that the Scriptures were written so many centuries earlier.

Thirdly, the **experience** of sharing in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection is the testimony of countless millions in many ages and lands. The apostle Paul writes of this experience in his letter to the Romans – chapter 6, vv 3&4:

For surely you know that when we were baptised into union with Jesus Christ, we were baptised into union with his death. By your baptism, then, we were buried with him and shared his death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from death by the glorious power of the Father, so also we might live a new life. (Good News Bible)

How is it that so many people can say today that Jesus Christ is alive and we know Him and we live a new life in Him? One cannot share life with the dead, only with the living. Jesus Christ is the friend and companion of many today.

It is not that we merely know about Him – about the events of his life and death and resurrection. It is not that we have merely read the Biblical records and have some knowledge. We know Him. We have a personal relationship with a living Lord. If He is alive, He can be met and known. Becoming acquainted with Jesus Christ as a living person was Paul's experience in Asia in the first century. It is in the experience of meeting Jesus that we become his followers. We thank God for the event, we read the records and we enjoy the experience of a new life. All this we can share with our fellow men and women whether they are Ahmadi or not. We can also pray for the. Ahmadis have traditionally been very opposed to Christianity. Now orthodox Muslims are rejecting them. Like all, they may respond to love. Part of our loving is learning about them, sharing with them, but it is also praying for them.