

Some Reflections on the Ahmadiyya /Qadiani Movement

Excerpts from the book: *Qadianism: A Critical Study*, by Syed Abdul Hasan Ali Nadvi.

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Towards the end of December 1957, and in the beginning of January 1958, an International Islamic Colloquium was held in Lahore under the auspices of the Punjab University in which a large number of distinguished and noted scholars of the Muslim world and Western countries took part. Quite a few outstanding Ulama of the Middle East were there to represent the countries to which they belonged. This writer could not reach Lahore in time despite having received an invitation to participate. He did reach Lahore, but after the Colloquium had terminated and found that the points raised during the Colloquium continued to be debated by the people. What was being particularly appreciated was the forceful advocacy of Islam, and the heart-warming expression of their religious loyalty by the representatives of Syria and Egypt.

The scholars who had come from Egypt, Syria and Iraq to participate in the conference showed considerable keenness to collect correct information about the fundamental beliefs and doctrines of Qadianism, the well-known religious movement of India and Pakistan. This curiosity on their part was justified and natural. For, it is in this part of the world that Qadianism was born and grew up. Hence, from here alone authentic material and information could be procured. The Pakistani and Indian friends of these guests felt the existence of a serious gap: the absence of any book on the subject in present-day Arabic which could be presented to them. It was owing to this feeling that when the writer reached Lahore he was ordered by his spiritual teacher and guide, Hazrat Maulana Abdul Qadir Raipuri, to write a book on this subject in Arabic.

During his trips to the Middle East and stay in Egypt and Syria the writer had himself felt the need of such a work, but the subject failed to capture his imagination. The subject was, on the whole, out of tune with his academic taste and temperament. Despite his repeated efforts, the writer did not succeed in forcing himself to study any of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's writings. Hence, when he undertook the task, he had little familiarity with the subject. But the demand had been made from a personage the compliance of whose wish is a matter of deepest spiritual satisfaction, and this enabled the writer to devote himself to a thorough study of Qadianism. Within a few days the room where the writer was staying at Lahore changed into a full-fledged library on Qadianism. The work then started in right earnest and for one month the writer remained so deeply immersed in the subject that he lost almost all touch with the outside world and had his mind free for no other subject in the world.

The writer's mental framework being that of a student of history, he launched upon his intellectual journey from the very beginning of the movement and went ahead surveying every stage in its progress and development. The writer's observations, therefore, moved along the lines through which the Qadianism had passed during its course of development. This approach helped the writer to grasp the real nature of the Qadiani Movement, its gradual evolution, and its motivating factors. This approach uncovered a number of aspects which would have remained hidden otherwise. The writer delved deep into the writings of the founder of this movement, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani himself, and it is through this first hand source that he has tried to arrive at an unprejudiced conclusion, trying to maintain the detachment of a historian in respect of the message, the movement, and the practical achievement of Qadianism. The result of this study, has been published in the form of *al-Qadiani wa al-Qadianiyet* in Arabic.

After the book had been prepared, Hazrat Maulana Abdul Qadir ordered for its translation in Urdu. Since actual excerpts in Urdu were required for the Urdu edition, an entire library of books was required once again and since it was available only in Lahore, another trip was made, after which this book was rendered into Urdu. This Urdu edition should better be regarded as an independent work because a number of valuable additions and modifications have been made during the process of its preparation.

For some time literature on controversial religious subjects has had a peculiar language and style, so much so that this language and style have come to be regarded as part and parcel of religious writings. The writer has not considered himself bound by that polemical tradition. The book has been written with historical sobriety rather than a controversialists' enthusiasm. This will perhaps disappoint those who have been used to polemical writings. For this the writer offers no apology. The class of people for whom it has been written and the purpose which actuated its writing did not warrant any other style of expression.

The writer thanks all those friends and well-wishers who have been a source of guidance in the study of the subject, provided him with the material needed for writing this book and for providing all possible facilities for the completion of the work. If this book serves Islam in any way, all such people share its reward.

The writer wishes to impress on his readers one thing: Wisdom requires that a person should refrain from risking even such a trivial thing as one's monetary savings, and one should be careful in choosing the people to whom these are to be entrusted. If

wisdom demands such precautions in worldly affairs, it should not be difficult to guess what a tremendous amount of precaution should be exercised in the matter of faith on which depends a person's salvation and his felicity in the eternal life of the Hereafter. It is evident that in such a matter one should exercise the extreme precaution; one should try to use one's discretion to the utmost, and to divest oneself of all emotional predilections worldly attachments and material interests. This book, through its authentic and systematically arranged information obtained from the statements and writings of the founder of Qadianism himself and through authentic historical information about the movement, can prove of help to many a person to arrive at an intelligent appreciation of Qadianism.

Conclusions

- One of the illusions about Qadianism is that its emergence merely signifies the addition of one more sect to the large number of already existing sectarian and juristic schools of Islam, and that the followers of Qadianism are, at the most, a new sect. Thus, Qadianism is not a unique phenomenon in the history of Muslim sects and schools.

A careful study of Qadianism is bound to shatter this illusion and to force upon every fair-minded student the conclusion that Qadianism is a religion by itself, and the Qadianis a separate community (Ummah), parallel to Islam and the Ummah of Islam.

- Among the different anti-Islam movements which have arisen in our history, Qadianism is unique. For, if other movements had been directed against Islam as a whole, Qadianism is a conspiracy which is specifically directed against the Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be on him), and challenges the finality of Islam and the unity of Muslims. By repudiating the finality of prophethood, Qadianism obliterated the very borderlines which distinguished this Ummah from all other.
- Moreover, it is also to be noted that the Mirza raised the standard of his prophethood and declared all those who did not accept his claim as Kafirs in a Muslim world which was already torn by dissension. By so doing, however, the Mirza raised an iron wall between himself and the Muslims. On the one side of this wall there are a few thousand followers of the Mirza, and on the other side is the rest of the Muslim world which stretches from Morocco to China and has great personalities, virtuous movements of reform, and valuable institutions. They stand isolated from and opposed to the whole of this world. Thus he unnecessarily added to the difficulties of Muslims, further aggravated their disunity and added a new complication to the problems facing them.

The Mirza has made no worthwhile contribution to the intellectual and religious heritage of Muslims which would call for his recognition and because of which he might deserve the gratitude of the present generation of Muslims. Nor did he initiate a broad-based movement for the revival of Islam which could profit the Muslims as a whole, nor help Muslims to solve any of the major problems facing them, nor did his movement contain any message for the contemporary civilization which is in the grips of major crisis and is interlocked in a life and death struggle. Nor can he even be credited with any significant achievement vis-a-vis the expansion of Islam either in India or Europe. His message remained addressed to the Muslims and of necessity could only lead to mental confusion and unnecessary religious squabbles within the Muslim community. If the Mirza can be considered successful, it is only in so far as he bequeathed to his family the legacy of spiritual leadership and worldly prosperity, the legacy of a kind of theocracy in which respect he is comparable to the Agha Khan and his ancestors.

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