

AL-AHMADIYYA

**Abul Hasan Nadawi's Objection against
the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement and
Maulana Muhammad 'Ali's Commentary
of the Qur'an Analysed**

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Members of the *Aḥmadiyyah Anjuman Ishā'at Islām* (Lahore- Pakistan) believe that :

—After the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), God has barred the appearance of any prophet, new or old.

—Angel Gabriel cannot bring 'prophetic revelation' to any person as this would contradict the two complimentary verses : "This day have I perfected for you your religion" (5 : 3), "Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh and the Seal of the prophets" (33 : 40). It would otherwise violate the sanctity of finality of prophet-hood in Islam.

—All the Companions of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (*aṣḥāb*) and all the spiritual leaders (*imāms*) are venerable.

—It is incumbent to believe in the missions of all reformers (*mujaddid*).

—He who believes that "there is no God but Allāh and Muhammad is His Prophet" (*kalimah*) cannot be regarded an unbeliever or infidel (*kāfir*).

—No verse of the Holy Quran has been, or shall ever be, abrogated.

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Chapter I

NADAWĪ'S GENERAL REMARKS ABOUT THE AḤMADIYYA MOVEMENT

In his book *Qādiānism — A Critical Study*, the *Mawlānā* S. Abul Ḥasan 'Alī Nadawī has devoted a complete chapter to the Lahore Branch of the Aḥmadiyya Movement. In his introductory remarks he says about the Rabwah section that :

“It is also *beyond doubt that this group faithfully represents* the teachings of the Mirzā insofar as he had claimed prophethood for himself in clear and vigorous terms.”¹ (Italics are mine).

A little further he sums up the position of the Founder of the Movement :

“There can be no doubt that he did say that (1) he was a prophet, (2) that he had received revelation, (3) that he was entitled to prescribe do's and dont's, (4) that he was the bearer of Shari'ah (Divine Law), and (5) that the one who rejected him was a *kāfir* and doomed to hell-fire.”²

(The nos within the text are given by me).

If Rabwah group “beyond doubt” faithfully represents the teachings of the Founder then Nadawī's summing-up is not right, because they do not believe that the Founder was :

Entitled to prescribe do's and dont's (No. 3 above).

That he was the bearer of Shari'ah (Divine Law) (No. 4).

That one who rejected him was...doomed to hell-fire (No. 5).

Either Nadawī is “faithfully” representing the Founder's position or the Rabwah section. Both cannot be right at the same time. This is another example of Nadawī's

1. Abul Hasan 'Alī Nadawī, *Qādiānism*, p. 132, published 1965 by Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, Nadwat-ul-'Ulamā', Lucknow, India.

2. *Ibid.*

confused thinking.¹

As far as our standpoint is concerned we only accept No. 2 as correct that :

“He had received revelation” and the word revelation (*wahy*) should also be qualified with the condition that this revelation was such as was granted to the saints (*auliyā'*) only and not the revelation as was granted to the prophets (*anbiyā'*). The Holy Qur'ān clearly mentions of revelation being granted to non-prophets, e.g.,

“And We revealed to Moses' mother.”²

“And when I revealed to the disciples of Jesus.”³

Neither Moses' mother nor the disciples of Jesus Christ were prophets but they were certainly favoured with the gift of revelation. Some persons are alarmed at the use of the word revelation (*wahy*) and think that saints can have inspiration (*ilhām*) and not *wahy*. But this distinction is arbitrary. The Qur'ān has clearly used the word *wahy* in the above instances for non-prophets.

Nadawī imposes his own views and interpretations on the writings of the Founder

The other points raised in Nadawī's summing-up have been discussed before. Let us see what he says further on the subject :

“Muḥammad 'Alī tries to show that (1) the Mirzā never claimed prophethood in the technical sense of the word. (2) Wherever the Mirzā used terms like prophethood (*nubuwwah*), revelation (*wahy*) and disbelief (*kufr*), in Muḥammad 'Alī's opinion, he used them as Ṣūfī terms, in an allegorical and metaphorical fashion.”⁴

The question of prophethood and disbelief has been discussed in detail elsewhere. Here I would like to point out that it is the Founder himself (and not Muḥammad 'Alī, as Nadawī would let us believe) who said that he never claimed prophethood in the technical sense, that it was a common expression among the Sūfīs and that he

1. See also Annexe-I.

2. The Qur'ān, 28 Qaṣaṣ 7.

3. Ibid., 5 Mā'idah 111.

4. *Qādiānism*, p. 133.

used the term in the metaphorical fashion ; furthermore he never said that the deniers of his claim were *kāfirs* (infidels). The trouble with the *Maulānā Nadawī* is that he is fond of imposing his own views on the Founder, or on his followers. He prefers to add his own interpretations to the writings of the Founder which suit his own particular needs for his so-called "critical study" of the Aḥmadiyya Movement. Here are a few quotations from the writings of the Founder himself :

Metaphorical use of the term 'prophet'

"This humble servant has never laid claim to prophethood or messenger-ship in the real sense of the term. To apply a word in its non-real sense or to use it in conversation in its ordinary literal sense does not amount to heresy."¹

"If *muḥaddasiyyah* is looked upon as prophethood metaphorically, does this amount to a claim to prophethood."²

سمعت نبيا من الله على طريق المجاز لا على وجه الحقيقة

"I have been called a prophet only by way of metaphor and not by way of reality."³

انى ما ادعيت النبوة و ما قلت لهم انى نبي واكن تعجلوا وانطاوا في فهم قولى.....ما قلت للناس الا ما كتبت في كتبى من النى محدث ويكلمنى الله كما يكلم المحدثين -

"Neither did I lay claim to prophethood nor did I say to them that I was a prophet. But these people made haste and misunderstood me in my statement. ...I have told the people nothing except that I was a *muḥaddas* and God communicated with me as He did with other *muḥaddasīn*."⁴

ما فهموا قولى و قالوا ان هذا الرجل يدعى النبوة والله يعلم ان قولهم هذا كذب بحت لا يمازجه شئى من الصدق لا اصل له.....نعم قلت ان اجزاء النبوة توجد في التحديث كلها ولكن بالقوة لا بالفعل فالحديث نبي بالقوة ولو لم يكن سد باب النبوة لكان لنبيا بالفعل

"These people did not understand me and said that

1. *Anjām Atham*, p. 27 footnote, published 1899.

2. *Izālah Auhām*, p. 340, published 1891.

3. *Ḥaḥiqat-ul-Wahy*, p. 65, supplement *Istiftā'*, published 1907.

4. *Ḥamāmat-ul-Buḥrā*, p. 79, published 1903.

this person was a claimant to prophethood and God knows that this saying of theirs was quite baseless I said it is true that *muḥaddas* contained all elements of prophethood in him in a potential form and not in point of position and if the door of prophethood was not closed he would have been a prophet in position as well.”¹

Sufi terms

“But it must be remembered, as I have just explained, that sometimes in God’s revelation such words are used by way of metaphor and simile for some righteous servants (*auliyā*) and they are not used by way of reality. This is the whole dispute which has been dragged towards another direction by the ignorant and the prejudiced. The name of the coming Promised Messiah as a prophet of God which has been uttered in *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim etc. by the noble tongue of the Holy Prophet is to be taken in the same metaphorical sense which is an ordinary and accepted term among the books of the great *ṣūfīs*. Otherwise how can there be a prophet after the *khātam al-anbiyā*’ (the last of the Prophets).”²

Thus it is not Muḥammad ‘Alī who tries to show that the “Mirzā never claimed prophethood in the technical sense and that he used the word as a *ṣūfī* term in a metaphorical fashion” but it is the Founder himself who draws the reader’s attention towards this fact, by neglecting which friends and foes have stumbled over the real claim of the Founder.

Inscription on the grave changed by the Rabwah section

When the Founder died, the inscription on his grave contained the words “*Promised Messiah and the Mujaddid of the Fourteenth Century*”.³ A few years later (around 1931) the writing was changed by the party in power at that time (the leaders of the Rabwah Section). The word *Mujaddid* was omitted.⁴ This is another evidence how be-

1. *Ḥamāmat-ul-Buṣhrā*, p. 81.

2. *Anjām Atham*, p. 28, footnote.

3. *Al-Faḍl*, (organ of the Rabwah Section) 12th September, 1936, p. 7, col. 3, see also *Tārīkh-i-Aḥmadiyyat*, vol. 3, p. 564; by Dost Muḥammad Shāhid, Rabwah, 1962 ed.

4. *Al-Faḍl*, 26th December, 1939, p. 4, col. 4.

belief in the prophethood of the Founder was introduced by the Rabwah Section which is mistakenly considered by Nadawī as representing the true teachings of the Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement.

The acceptance of a person as the Promised Messiah does not affect any fundamental belief of Islam

Nadawī has focussed his attention on another point that Muḥammad ‘Alī regarded the Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement as a *Mujaddid* (renovator) of the fourteenth century of Hijrah and “above all that, the Promised Messiah”.¹

In fact the real claim of the Founder was that of a *Mujaddid*. In his own words :

“Nobody except this humble servant has claimed to be the *Mujaddid* of the fourteenth century... And this must be remembered that the claim of being the Promised Messiah is not in any way greater than the claim of being a recipient of Divine communication or of being a *Mujaddid* from God.”²

In one of his last books he wrote :

“I am that Promised Messiah who is the *Mujaddid* of the latter ages.”³

But does belief in the Founder as the Promised Messiah alter any article of Islamic faith ?

Different views among Muslims about Jesus Christ

There are Muslims who believe that Jesus Christ is physically alive in heaven and would, at a later stage, return in body among Muslims. This belief is indeed contrary to the belief in the finality of prophethood in the person of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad. Here is where the Qādiānīs and Muslims (who support the views held by Nadawī) meet. Whether one believes in the coming of a new prophet or in the appearance of an old one, belief in the finality of prophethood is shaken to the core.

There are other Muslims who believe that Jesus Christ died a natural death. Among them are the late Maḥmūd Shaltūt, Al-Marāghī, Muftī Muḥammad ‘Abduh,

1. *Qādiānism*, p. 133.

2. *Ā’īnah Kamālāt Islām*, p. 340, published 1893.

3. *Ḥaqīqat-ul-Waḥy*, p. 194, published 1907.

Rashīd Riḍā, etc. To them the question of the coming of Messiah does not arise.

There are still others (like the late *Maulānā* Abul Kalām Āzād) who believe him to be dead but do not deny the authenticity of the the report about his coming.¹ In what way that coming will take place they do not know.

There are still others who believe Jesus Christ to be dead and to them his second advent only means the coming of a *Mujaddid* (renovator) from this nation of Islam, who would be given Messiah's name by way of metaphor. I must point out here that this is the position the members of the Lahore Aḥmadiyya Movement hold. By accepting the Founder as the Promised Messiah no new belief in Islam is created. We have bowed our head before the saying and prophecy of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad. Nadawī has a right to say that we have made a mistake in interpreting this prophecy as we have a right to say that Nadawī has made a mistake in rejecting this interpretation. But one point is clear that the acceptance of this prophecy as interpreted by us has not created any new belief or creed or altered any fundamental belief of the religion of Islam. In fact that is the only way of keeping the concept of the finality of prophethood intact.

In passing it must be pointed out here that some great ṣūfīs have also accepted the coming of Messiah with a different body.²

1. Muḥammad 'Alī, *The Aḥmadiyyah Movement* (translation of his Urdu work entitled *Taḥrik-i-Aḥmadiyyat* by S. M. Tufail), p. 341, published 1973.

2. The belief of Muḥyi al-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī (b. July 1165, d. October 1240) was :

وجب نزول في اخر الزمان بتعلقه بدن اخر

.e. "his descent in latter ages will be with a different body" (See *Tafsīr 'Arā'is al-Bayān*, Vol. 1, p. 262, printed by Nawal Kishor Press, Lucknow, India).

Annexe — I

Reference footnote p. 2.

A Shi'ah scholar, unlike S. Abul Hasan 'Alī Nadawī, has clearly admitted that the Rabwah section does not faithfully represent the teachings of the Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement. In his opinion :

“The true and correct interpretation of the words *khātam-un-nabiyyīn*, *khātam-ul-anbiyā'* and *lā nabiyya ba'di* is the last prophet. This is what all Muslims believe and this view has been supported by the Qur'ān, Ḥadīs and the Aḥmadiyya literature. Mirzā Ṣāhib (i.e. the Founder of the Aḥmadiyya Movement, T.) has thrown enough light on this point. According to him the coming Promised Messiah has been called a prophet only in the sense of being a *muḥaddas* (one spoken to by God)” (Sayyid Amīr Ḥussain Shāh Bukhārī, *Qāṭi'-ul-Burhān*, p. ج Introduction, first edition, published by Manzūr Ḥussain Khan, House No. M/874, Mohalla Amar Pura, Miskeen Road, Rawalpindi, Pakistan).

“Members of the Aḥmadiyya Jamā'at (Rabwah, T.) may believe whatever they like, we have, however, proved that Mirzā Ṣāhib also gave the same interpretation to the expression *khātam-un-nabiyyīn* and *khātam-i-nubuwwat* as is accepted by the general body of Muslims. Mirzā Ṣāhib did not believe at all in the coming of a new prophet after the Holy Prophet Muḥammad” (*Ibid.*, p. d).

Chapter II

NADAWĪ'S CRITICISM OF MUḤAMMAD 'ALĪ'S COMMENTARY — A

With regard to Muḥammad 'Alī's commentary Nadawī writes :

“Muḥammad 'Alī interprets the Qur'ānic verses in a highly arbitrary and forced manner. He goes to any ridiculous length of casuistry to support his interpretation on the basis of the feeblest of evidences. In these explanations he sets aside all that might stand in the way of making the Holy Qur'ān conform to the whims and inclinations of the modern man. The accepted principles of *Tafsīr*, the rules of languages and literature, the understanding of these terms on the part of the Companions of the Holy Prophet and Arabic-speaking people, the exegeses of the earlier scholars, all these are rejected out of hand to show that the Qur'ānic verses have nothing which is regarded as 'out of fashion' in the present age.”¹

Principles of the Qur'anic interpretation followed by Muhammad 'Alī

In the above passage Nadawī has made many false accusations in one breath. Let us first see what are the principles of interpretation which Muḥammad 'Alī has kept in his mind while writing his notes. In his own words :

“The principle of the greatest importance to which I have adhered in interpreting the Holy Qur'ān is that :

(1) *No word of the Holy Book should be interpreted in such a manner as to contradict the plainer teachings of the Holy Qur'ān*, a principle to which the Holy Word has itself called the attention of its reader in 3 : 6 ; see footnote 387. This rule forms the basis of my interpretation of the Holy Qur'ān, and this is a very sound basis, if we remember that the Holy Qur'ān contains metaphors, parables, and allegories side by side with plain teachings.

1. *Qādiānism*, p. 134.

(2) The practice (*Sunnah*) and Sayings of the Holy Prophet, when contained in reliable reports are the best commentary of the Holy Word, and I have therefore attached the greatest importance to them.

(3) Earlier authorities have also been respected, but reports and comments contradicting the Holy Qur'an itself cannot but be rejected.

(4) I have also kept before me the rule that the meaning to be adopted in any case should be that which suits the context best, and

(5) The only other limitation to which I have subjected myself is that the use of that word in that sense is allowed by the Lexicons or by Arabic literature.

(6) Existing translations have rendered me great help, but I have adopted an interpretation only after fully satisfying myself and having recourse to original authorities.

(7) *Many of the stories generally accepted by the commentators find no place in my commentary,¹ except in case where there is either sufficient historical evidence or the corroborative testimony of some reliable Saying of the Holy Prophet.* Many of these stories, I believe, were incorporated into Islamic literature by the flow of converts from Judaism and Christianity into Islam.

(8) I must add that the present tendency of Muslim theologians *to regard the commentaries of the Middle Ages as the final word on the interpretation of the Holy Qur'an is very injurious* and practically shuts out the great treasures of knowledge, which an exposition of the Holy Book in new light reveals.

(9) *A study of the old commentators, to ignore whose great labour would indeed be a sin, also shows how freely they commented upon the Holy Book.* The great service which they have done to the cause of Truth would indeed have been lost to the world, if they had looked

1. This point seems to hurt Nadawī most, as Muḥammad 'Alī has rejected many fanciful legends of the commentators of the Middle Ages. Surprisingly enough many Muslim commentators of the Modern age are now also following in the footsteps of Muḥammad 'Alī in this respect.

upon their predecessors as uttering the final word on the exposition of the Holy Qur'ān, as most theologians do today."¹

The numbering and the italics in the above quotation are mine.

The opinion of Muslim and Non-Muslim scholars about Muhammad 'Alī's Commentary

Nadawī has made a few sweeping statements to ridicule and reject Muḥammad 'Alī's commentary entirely. A book which has shown the light of truth to thousands of people falls under his critical eye as if it contains nothing worthwhile. But other people have a different opinion on the subject. This is what the *Maulānā* 'Abdul Mājīd Daryābādī, an orthodox scholar of Islam and a commentator of the Holy Qur'ān in English and Urdū, wrote about Muḥammad 'Alī's translation :

"To deny the excellence of Maulavī Muḥammad 'Alī's translation, the influence it has exercised and its proselytizing utility, would be to deny the light of the sun. The translation certainly helped in bringing thousands of non-Muslims to the Muslim fold and hundreds of thousands of unbelievers much nearer Islam. Speaking of my own self, I gladly admit that this translation was one of the few books which brought me towards Islam fifteen or sixteen years ago when I was groping in darkness, atheism and scepticism. Even the *Maulānā* Muḥammad 'Alī of the *Comrade* was greatly enthralled by his translation and had nothing but praise for it."²

In 'Abdul Mājīd's opinion to deny the excellence of Muḥammad 'Alī's translation is to deny the light of the sun. This is what Nadawī has been trying to do.

Here is the opinion of a non-Muslim scholar :

"One cannot read far in the translation of Maulavī Muḥammad 'Alī or in his notes without being convinced that before he began his work on the Koran he was already widely read in the Arabic Authorities listed on p. lx, to

1. Muḥammad 'Alī, The Holy Qur'ān with Arabic Text, English Translation and Commentary, p. vii, Preface, published 1965.

2. *Such* (☞) weekly, Lucknow, India, 25th June, 1943.

which frequent reference is made in his notes ; also his quotations from Lane's Lexicon indicate that he was not altogether oblivious to the results of European scholarship."¹

Muhammad 'Ali compared with other commentators

According to Nadawī, however, Muḥammad 'Alī has subjected the Holy Qur'ān 'to distortion' and has reduced 'it to a plaything'. Before taking up his remarks on particular verses it would be interesting to make a comparative study of Muḥammad 'Alī's research in the Qur'ānic field with that of some of Nadawī's own favourite Qur'ānic commentators and scholars. It is up to any fair-minded reader, Arab or non-Arab, to find out for himself how far Nadawī is justified in his accusations against this noble son of Islam. Let us study the interpretation of the following verses :

1. "Stories without head and tail about Solomon"

*"And verily We tried Solomon, and set upon his throne a (mere) body. Then did he repent."*²

The *Maulānā Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Usmānī*, whom Nadawī regards a great scholar of Islam and sometimes quotes him to refute Muḥammad 'Alī's interpretation,³ explains this verse in the following manner :

"It is mentioned in a true report (*ḥadis*) that one day Solomon took oath that in the night he would visit all his wives (which were either seventy, or ninety, or nearly a hundred) and that every wife would beget him a son who would be a warrior in Allah's way. The angel put it in his heart that he should say *inshā'-Allāh* (if God please) but (although the thought of it was in Solomon's mind) he did not utter the words by mouth. As God would have it, as a result of his

1. *The Moslem World*, p. 303, July 1931, published by the Hartford Seminary Foundation, Hartford, Connecticut, U.S.A.

2. The Qur'ān, 38 Sād 34, (Marmaduke Pickthall's translation, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*).

3. Urdū edition of *Qādiānism* entitled *Qādiāniyyat* p. 211, second edition, 1966. See also Nadawī's *Muslims in India*, p. 91, published by Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, Nadwat-ul-'Ulamā', Lucknow, India.

co-habitation none of the women gave birth to a child. Only one wife begot him a mis-shapen invalid. Some commentators say that the midwife laid that underdeveloped child on the throne saying: 'Lo! this is the result of your oath. The same has been regarded as 'jasad' (body) here in this verse. When Solomon saw this he turned towards God in repentance and asked God's forgiveness for omitting to say *inshā'*-Allāh.... It is mentioned in the *ḥadīs* that had he said *inshā'*-Allāh God would have fulfilled his desire. (Warning): Most of the commentators have explained this verse in another way and have narrated many stories, without head and tail, about Solomon's ring and the Jinns. Whoever is interested could look them up in the books of *tafāsīr* (commentaries)."¹

Maulānā Maududi condemns 'Usmānī's interpretation

The above is the interpretation given by 'Usmānī against stories "without head and tail" of "most" of the commentators. But is 'Usmānī's interpretation worthy of acceptance, although he says it is based on a "true report"? Sayyid Abul A'lā Maudūdī, another commentator of the Qur'ān to whom Nadawī shows great respect² has rejected 'Usmānī's interpretation entirely along with the stories of "most" of the commentators like Rāzī and Ibn Kasīr. With regard to 'Usmānī's "true report" he says :

"As to its credentials most of them are strong, and according to the standard of judging a report (*ḥadīs*) *its authenticity cannot be questioned but the subject matter of the report is entirely against reason* and speaks aloud that these things, as reported, could not have been uttered by the Prophet in this way. On the other hand, on some occasion he might have referred to it as an example of the nonsensical stories current among the Jews and it was mistaken by some hearer as if the Prophet himself was narrating such an incident as a fact. *To make people swallow such reports, on the mere basis of the correctness of reporting, is*

1. *Al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm* Urdū Commentary by the *Maulānā Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Usmānī*, p. 781, published by Tāj Company Ltd., Lahore, Pakistan.

2. Nadawī, *Muslims in India*, p. 32. The Arabic translation of this book *المسلمون في الهند Al-Muslimuna fi 'l-Hind* is also available.

to make religion a laughing stock. It is easy for anyone to calculate that in the longest night in winter there are only ten or eleven hours between the '*Ishā*' (late night) and *Fajr* (early morning) prayers. If the minimum number of wives is to be taken sixty this means that Solomon, without taking rest, visited six wives in an hour and went on doing so for ten or eleven hours. Is it practically possible ?¹

“And can it be accepted that the Holy Prophet Muḥammad reported it as an incident which had truly occurred ? Further on this has not been mentioned at all in *ḥadīṣ* that the the mis-shapen invalid was the 'body' (*jasad*), as referred to in the Holy Qur'ān, which was placed on the throne of Solomon. Therefore this cannot be asserted that the Prophet Muḥammad narrated this incident for the sake of explaining this verse.”²

Italics are mine.

Muhammad 'Ali's explanation

Perhaps to the utter disappointment of Nadawī, the *Maulānā* Maudūdī has entirely rejected the views of the previous commentators, Arabs and non-Arabs alike. Even the authentic reporting could not change his mind as he did not want to make religion a “laughing stock”. Maudūdī has given his own interpretation of the above verse which is not far different from what Muḥammad 'Alī has said on the subject. Muḥammad 'Alī writes :

“By the *mere body* that was put on his throne is meant either his son Rehoboam, who lost the allegiance of all except a single tribe of Israel (I Kings 12 : 17), or Jeroboam, who led the revolt against the house of David, and, on becoming king of ten tribes, set up image-worship in Dan and Beth-el, the two calves being supposed to be images of Jehovah (I Kings 12 : 28), and also began the worship of molten images (I Kings 14 : 9). Thus both Rehoboam and Jeroboam answer the description of a body (without real

1. According to Nadawī, everything is possible “only if supernatural things are affirmed”!

2. Abul A'ī Maudūdī, *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 4, p. 337, under the verse 38 : 34, 1st edition 1966, Lahore, Pakistan.

life) thrown on Solomon's throne."¹

2. Birth of a pregnant she-camel out of a solid rock !

The Prophet Ṣāliḥ was given a sign of a she-camel about which it was said :

*"So leave her alone to pasture in Allāh's earth and do her no harm, lest painful chastisement overtake you."*²

About this she-camel 'Usmānī the favourite commentator of Nadawī writes :

"Ṣāliḥ's people had promised that if he brought a pregnant she-camel out of the solid rock they would believe in him. God delivered it (from the rock) after hearing Ṣāliḥ's prayer. It is being told to the rejectors that their requested miracle had taken place. What was then holding them back from accepting Ṣāliḥ?"³

'Usmānī writes a little further :

"It is said that this she-camel was so huge that in whatever jungle it pastured other animals ran in fright. The day she had her turn to drink water she would empty the whole well. As she was born in a supernatural manner her signs of life and her ways of living were also supernatural."⁴

The same view is held by 'Abdul Mājid Daryābadī in his English and Urdū commentaries.

Sulaiman Nadawi and other Muslim scholars reject this interpretation :

However, the 'Allāmah Sulaiman Nadawī has a different story to tell :

"عام روایت میں ہے کہ یہ اونٹنی معہ اپنے بچہ کے کفار کے سب طلب ، حضرت صالح علیہ السلام کے ایک معجزہ سے ایک پہاڑ کی چٹان سے پیدا ہوئی تھی ۔ لیکن صحیح طریقہ سے یہ روایتیں ثابت نہیں ۔ قرآن مجید نے بھی اپنی تمام تفصیل میں اس خاص طریقہ پر ہدائش کا ذکر نہیں کیا ۔ اس بنا پر وہ غور مسلم ہیں ۔"
(تاریخ ارض القرآن جلد ۱ ص ۱۹۵ مطبع ، معارف اعظم گڑھ ۔ بھارت ۔
طبع چہارم ۱۹۵۵ء)

1. Muḥammad 'Alī, English Commentary, p. 872.

2. The Qur'ān, 7 al-A'rāf 73.

3. Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Usmānī, Urdū Commentary, p. 278.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 279.

“It is generally reported that as a miracle of Ṣāliḥ this she-camel with her young was delivered out of the rock of a mountain at the request of the disbelievers. *But such reports are not authentic.* In all the details (of this event) the Qur’ān does not mention at all this peculiar mode of her birth. Hence these reports are untrustworthy.”¹

Italics are mine

If Muḥammad ‘Alī had said the same thing Nadawī would have jumped to the conclusion that he was interpreting the Holy Qur’ān in “a highly arbitrary and forced manner” and that he was rejecting the supernatural because “affirmation of miracles appeared old-fashioned and unscientific” (as will be seen later in his remarks about Muḥammad ‘Alī’s commentary). But he would naturally keep quiet when it comes to the interpretation of his own respected teacher and guide Sulaimān Nadawī, who in fact, has re-echoed the ideas of Muḥammad ‘Alī who wrote on the subject years ago :

“Neither the Holy Qur’ān nor any reliable saying of the Holy Prophet lends any support to the numerous legends regarding the miraculous appearance and prodigious size of the she-camel. It is called Allāh’s she-camel because it was given as a sign from Allāh. It was an ordinary she-camel, which was given as a sign to a people. Their slaying of it was a sign that they would neither accept the truth, nor cease persecuting Ṣāliḥ and his followers.

It may be noted here that there is nothing strange that a camel should be given as a sign, when even now we can see that a roughly constructed house known as the Ka’ba is given as a sign to the whole world, so that whoever tries to destroy it will perish.”²

It may be pointed out here that the fantastic conjectures of the commentators have been rejected by Rashīd

1. Sayyid Sulaimān Nadawī, *Tārīkh Arḍ al-Qur’ān*, 4th edition, 1955, Vol. 1, p. 195, published by Matba’ Ma’ārif, A’zam Garh, India.

2. Muḥammad ‘Alī, English Commentary, p. 335.

Riḍā' also.¹ Yūsuf 'Alī, however, is a little apologetic when he says :

“The story of this wonderful she-camel, that was a sign to the Thamūd is variously told in tradition. We need not follow the various versions in the traditional story.”²

1. Muḥammad Raḡīd Riḍā', *Tafsīr al-Manār*, vii, p. 502, published Cairo, 1367-72 A.H.

2. Yūsuf 'Alī, *English Commentary of the Qur'ān*, one volume edition, p. 361, under v. 7 : 73.

Chapter III

NADAWĪ'S CRITICISM OF MUHAMMAD 'ALĪ'S COMMENTARY — B

After the foregoing remarks it is time I discussed in detail Nadawī's direct comments on Muḥammad 'Alī's explanations of some of the verses of the Qur'ān.

Moses' prayer for water

Nadawī writes :

(1) In the Second Chapter of the Holy Qur'ān it has been said that when Moses (peace of God be upon him) prayed to God, he was asked to strike with his staff. This made twelve springs gush forth and the twelve tribes of the Israelites drank to their fill. The Qur'ānic verses read :

*'And when Moses prayed for water for his people, We said : Strike the rock with thy staff. So there flowed from it twelve springs. Each tribe knew its drinking place.'*¹

If one were to interpret this verse in the light of the words in which this incident has been conveyed (without any metaphysical assumptions) one would be forced to the conclusion that this was a supernatural incident, and it is in this way that this verse has been understood from the days of the Holy Prophet till now. However, such an occurrence obviously is contrary to normal human experience and runs counter to our understanding of physical and geological laws. This forced Muḥammad 'Alī to interpret it in quite a new way. Let us reproduce what he has to say on the point :

'The words *idrib bi 'aṣā ka-l-ḥajara* may be translated in two ways, strike the rock with thy staff, or march on or go forth or hasten, to the rock with thy staff

1. The Holy Qur'ān, 2 Al-Baqarah 60.

Darb means striking, smiting, marching on, going from place to place, setting forth a parable, and carries a number of other significances. In fact, *ḍarb* is used to indicate all kinds of actions except a few (*Tāj al-‘Arūs*). When *ard* (land or earth) is its object, it carries the significance of going about or seeking a way. Thus *ḍaraba-l arḍa* or *ḍaraba fi-l arḍi* both signify, he journeyed in the land or went forth or hastened in the land (*Lane’s Lexicon*). The object of *idrib* here is *al-ḥajar* which means a rock or mountain to which there is no access, as explained by *Tha‘labī* (*Lane’s Lexicon*). ‘*Aṣā* ordinarily means staff or rod, but its primary significance is a state of combination (*Tāj al-‘Arūs* and *Lane’s Lexicon*), and the word is metaphorically used to speak of a community. Thus of the *Khawārij*, a Muslim sect, it is said, *shaqqu ‘asa-l-Muslimīna* (lit., *they broke the staff of the Muslims*) which means that they made a schism in the state of combination and union, or in the community of the Muslims (*Lisān al-‘Arab*). Hence the words may mean *strike the rock with thy staff, or march on to the mountain with thy staff or thy community...* What the words of the Qur’ān signify is either that Moses was commanded by God to smite a particular rock with his staff from which water flowed forth miraculously, or to march on to a mountain from which springs flowed”¹

What is significant about this interpretation of the verse is that the latter alternative has been put forth as a possible meaning of the verse because affirmation of miracles appears old-fashioned and unscientific.”²

A greater ‘miracle’ if another version of the story is accepted!

If Abul Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadawī is looking for the supernatural in this incident the story that Moses carried a stone with him and water flowed from it whenever it was struck with his staff is more miraculous in its nature. And this version

1. Muḥammad ‘Alī, English Commentary, p. 29.

2. *Qādiānism*, pp. 135-136.

is also supposed to be narrated 'from the days of the Holy Prophet till now'. As the story goes this stone in question was of cubic shape and the size of a bull's head and was carried on the back of a bull. When it was struck by Moses' staff the water started flowing and when it was hit again the water dried up. Some commentators have only accepted this interpretation of the verse.¹

Abul Hasan 'Alī Nadawī seems to reject this 'greater' miracle, perhaps because he himself found its affirmation 'old-fashioned and un-scientific'. He is careful in this respect and entirely omits the comments by Muhammad 'Alī repudiating the story of a stone being carried by Moses. Here is the omitted part of the commentary :

"The story that Moses carried a stone with him and that twelve springs flowed from it whenever, placing it in the wilderness, he struck it with his staff, has no foundation in the words of the Holy Qur'ān or any saying of the Prophet. What the words of the Holy Qur'ān signify is *either that Moses was commanded by God to smite a particular rock with his staff from which water flowed forth miraculously, or, to march on to a mountain from which springs flowed*".²

Muhammad 'Alī never denies the true miracle

Nadawī has accepted one of Muhammad 'Alī's interpretations as correct (printed in italics in the above passage) and has rejected the possibility of the other interpretation "or to march on to a mountain from which springs flowed".

The fact is that Muhammad 'Alī has not denied the miracle in both instances.³ When the Israelites were hard

1. *Tafsīr* of Ibn Kasīr.

2. Muhammad 'Alī, English Commentary, p. 29.

3. In his great hurry to go through the Aḥmadiyya literature (Nadawī did it in a month or so, see *Qādīānism*, p. ii), he would only see things which would confirm his pre-conceived notions about the Movement. He keeps on harping on the point, contrary to facts, that Muhammad 'Alī was a denier of miracles. He would not see M. 'A.'s clear statement on this subject that : "No Muslim can deny the mira-

pressed for water and were in a state of extreme exasperation and were even prepared to stone Moses to death, God revealed to Moses the knowledge of a specific spot where water could be found. This 'Revealed Knowledge' was the real miracle and the source of this supernatural incident. Both the interpretations given by Muḥammad 'Alī affirm this basic truth.

Was the dead Israelite really revived ?

Nadawī writes :

“(2) Another instance is his explanation of the following verse :

‘And when you killed a man, then you disagreed about it. And Allāh was to bring forth what you were hiding. So We said : Smite him with a part of it. Thus Allāh brings the dead to life, and He shows you His signs that you may understand.’¹

Now, the general Muslim interpretation of the incident is that an Israelite had been killed and the Israelites were not succeeding in tracing out the murderer. The successors of the dead asked Moses to find out from God who the murderer was. Earlier, the Israelites had been asked to slaughter a cow which they had done after considerable hesitation and with a feeling of remorse. In order to show the wisdom and reward of their compliance with Divine commandment, God ordered them to smite the dead man with some part of the slaughtered cow which would make the dead man tell the name of the murderer. This was a very effective means of teaching the Jews the blessings of honouring and obeying God's commandments. In fact, anyone who goes through these Qur'ānic verses without any preconceived notion is bound to interpret it in no other manner. But since this involved a categorical affirmation of miracle,

cles of the prophets” (*Bayān-ul-Qur'ān*, p. 212, 1969 ed.). Thus it is not the miracles of the prophets, but the fanciful legends of the Israelites and some of the fantastic conjectures of the Muslim commentators which Muḥammad 'Alī has repudiated.

1. The Qur'ān, 2 Al-Baqarah, 72-73.

Muhammad 'Alī explains the verse quite differently."¹

Different interpretations of the same event

Nadawī says that "anyone who goes through these Qur'ānic verses without any preconceived notion is bound to interpret it in no other way." Let us see how it has been interpreted by other commentators.

Nadawī's favourite commentator writes :

"An Israelite called 'Āmīl was murdered for his money by his nephew and no one would admit the crime. When the corpse was struck by a part of the slaughtered cow he became alive by God's command and blood started flowing from the dead man's wound and he told the name of the murderer after which he fell down and died."²

There are further details mentioned about this murder by other commentators. Ibn Kasīr has made a general remark :

"On the face of it, this seems to be an incident which occurred among Israelites about the truthfulness or falsehood of which we cannot decide, although its reporting is permissible."³

It is clear from the above remark that even the old commentators were not sure about its historic authenticity and Nadawī's so-called obvious interpretation. 'Abdul Mājīd Daryābādī in his Urdū commentary admits that to find out the historic truth about this incident, "One has to dig deep in the Jewish literature"⁴ which means that so far there is no historical evidence of such an incident in the Jewish history. That is why in the next footnote about the hiding of the murder (v. 72) he writes :

"As the commentators think, the command of slaughtering the cow in the previous section was *perhaps* for this occasion."⁵

1. *Qādiānism*, p. 137.

2. Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Usmānī, Urdū Commentary, p. 17.

3. *Tafsīr* of Ibn Kasīr.

4. 'Abdul Mājīd Daryābādī, Urdū Commentary, p. 29.

5. *Ibid.*

I have italicised the word *perhaps* to show uncertainty in the author's mind or perhaps in the minds of the previous exegetes. Although Abul A'ḷā Maudūdī agrees with the previous interpreters, he finds the words *idribūhu bi ba'dihā* (v. 73) rather ambiguous :

اس کے الفاظ میں کچھ ابہام محسوس ہوتا ہے -

i.e. (lit.) "in these words some sort of ambiguity is felt."¹

If it can be interpreted in "no other manner" why the modern commentators should find parts of this verse 'ambiguous'.

The dead cannot return

It must be pointed out here that this highly imaginative story of a murdered person becoming miraculously alive when his corpse was struck by some flesh of a sacrificed cow, is neither mentioned in the Qur'ān, nor in any Saying of the Prophet, nor in the Bible. Furthermore the Qur'ān is clear on the point that the dead cannot return.²

Once the Companions of the Holy Prophet requested him to pray for a dead man that he should become alive. The reply of the Prophet was :

"Pray for his forgiveness and bury him."³

There is another saying of the Prophet on this subject.⁴ A companion of the Prophet, Jābir son of 'Abd Allāh, was informed by the Prophet that his father, 'Abd Allāh, who was slain in a battle with the enemies of Islam, on being asked by the Almighty what he desired most, expressed a wish to go back into the world and be slain again in the cause of Truth, but received the reply that this could not be, for "the word has gone forth from Me that *they shall not return*."⁵

Both the Holy Qur'ān and the Ḥadīs settle conclu-

1. Abul A'ḷā Maudūdī, *Tafhīm-ul-Qur'ān*, Vol. 1. p. 86.

2. The Qur'ān, 21 Al-Anbiyā' 95 ; 23 Al-Furqān 15, 99 ; 36 Yāsīn 31, etc.

3. *Muslim ; Mishkāt*.

4. *Ibn Mājah*, 24 : 15.

5. "And it is forbidden to a town which we destroy : they shall not return" (The Qur'ān, 21 Al-Anbiyā', 95).

sively that no one who is dead returns to life in this world.

Thus any verse cannot be interpreted in a manner that goes against the established principles of the Qur'ān. We cannot set aside these principles to 'affirm the supernatural' for a mere legend which has no foundation at all.

Some other possible explanations

Besides the explanation which Nadawī has given, this verse has been interpreted in several other ways :

(1) The murderer became frightened when his turn came to strike the corpse and thus betrayed his own crime. He was put to death in retaliation. The clause *thus Allāh brings the dead to life* (v. 73) means that the law of retaliation is an effective form of giving life to the dead (cf. 2. 179, *And there is life for you in retaliation, O men of understanding*). In this way the punishment prevents the would-be assassins from committing more murders and thus many who would have otherwise been the victims of assassination are saved.

(2) When the murderer struck the corpse, the corpse moved in such a way that those present realised who the real culprit was. The dead person, however, did not return to life.

(3) A modern commentator writes :

"The phrase *idribūhu bi ba'dihā* can be literally translated as strike him [or 'it' with something of her or 'it'] — and this possibility has given rise to the fanciful assertion by many commentators that the children of Israel were commanded to strike this corpse of the murdered man with some of the flesh of the sacrificed cow, whereupon he was miraculously restored to life and pointed out his murderer. Neither the Qur'ān, nor any Saying of the Prophet, nor even the Bible offers the slightest warrant for this highly imaginative explanation, which must, therefore be rejected quite apart from the fact that the pronoun *hu* in *idribūhu* has a masculine gender, while the noun *nafs* (here translated as 'human being') is, in Arabic, feminine in gender : from which it follows that the imperative *idribūhu* cannot possibly refer to *nafs*....As for the feminine pronoun *hā* in *ba'dihā* ('some of it'), it must necessarily relate to the nearest preceding feminine noun that is, to the *nafs*

that has been murdered, or to the act of murder itself about which (*fihā*) the community disagreed. Thus the phrase *idribūhu bi ba'dihā* may be suitably translated as 'apply this principle to some of those [cases of unresolved murder]': for it is obvious that the principle of communal responsibility for murder by a person or persons unknown can be applied only to some and not to all such cases."¹

Now let us see what Muḥammad 'Alī says about these verses. We should not forget here that according to him the best commentary of the Holy Qur'ān is the Holy Qur'ān itself. He is not infallible, as no commentator is, but his methods are sound. He has a lot of respect for the previous commentators, but he does not, at times, consider their views totally free from error. When he differs with them he gives his reasons and quotes his Arab and non-Arab authorities. Mark the following explanations from his commentary :

"The story generally narrated by the commentators to explain this passage is not based on any Saying of the Holy Prophet ; nor is it met with in the Bible. The very indefiniteness of the incident is an indication that it refers to some well-known event in history, and as almost all incidents of the stubbornness of the Jewish nation prior to the time of Jesus have been mentioned, it becomes almost certain this incident refers to Jesus himself, as it was with respect to his death that disagreement took place and many doubted his death. This inference becomes stronger when we compare the incidents narrated here with the same incidents as narrated in the fourth chapter in vv. 153-157, where, after enumerating almost all the incidents narrated here in the three previous sections, the Holy Qur'ān goes on to accuse the Jews in the following words : 'And their saying : Surely we have killed the Messiah.'

"This was really a case of giving life to the dead, for Jesus Christ was dead to all appearance. Those actually dead do not return to life in this world."²

1 Muḥammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ān*, pp. 21-22

2. Muḥammad 'Alī, *English Commentary*, pp. 34-35.

Clay-birds made by Jesus

“(3) The Qur’ān repeatedly mentions that to provide evidence of his prophethood, Jesus made from clay the form of a bird and then he breathed into the model and it sprang into life and flew into the air like a real bird.

‘And I made for you from the clay the form of a bird, then I breathe into it and it becomes a bird with Allah’s permission.’¹

The verse obviously suggests a miracle. In order to avoid that, Muhammad ‘Alī gives an out-and-out figurative interpretation of the verse.²

Muhammad ‘Alī’s interpretation confirms the basic teaching of the Qur’an

Abul Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadawī has rejected the interpretation by Muhammad ‘Alī as ‘novel’ but has failed to refute M.A.’s basis of this interpretation which is the Holy Qur’ān itself and not the fanciful stories of the previous commentators which Nadawī is so fond of defending. Let us first see what Muhammad ‘Alī says on this point :

“خلق *Khalq* in the sense of creation is exclusively a Divine attribute whether the creation is with matter or without matter. For instance the Qur’ān says :

‘Or, have they set up with Allāh associates who have created creation like His, so that what is created became confused to them ? Say, Allāh is the Creator of all things’ (13 : 16).

This means that the false gods have created nothing to cause confusion in what God has created although things have been falsely attributed to them as their ‘creation’. On the other hand none else besides God is the Creator of any thing as is so clearly pointed out in the words : *Allāh is the Creator of all things.*

At other places in the Holy Qur’ān it is stated :

‘He, Whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the

1. The Holy Qur’ān, 3 ‘Imrān 48.

2. *Qādiānism*, p. 139.

earth, and Who did not take to Himself a son, and Who has no associate in the kingdom, and Who created everything, then ordained for it a measure.

‘And they take besides Him gods who create naught while they are themselves created, and they control for themselves no harm nor profit, and they control not death, nor life, nor raising to life’ (25 : 2-3).

‘Our Lord is He Who gives to everything its creation then guides (it)’ (20 : 50).

The verses apply particularly to those on whose head divinity has been foisted It has been further stated :

‘And those whom they call on besides Allāh created naught, while they are themselves created. (Dead are they), not living. And they know not when they will be raised’ (16 : 20-21).

Similarly it has been remarked :

‘Is He, then, Who creates like one who creates not ?’ (16 : 17).

Now if it is accepted that Jesus created birds, he does not remain like human beings but becomes like God. Thus the Qur’ānic statement will be contradicted. But there is no contradiction in the Holy Qur’ān :

‘And if it were from any other than Allāh, they would have found in it many a discrepancy’ (4 : 82).

Thus when the Holy Qur’ān clearly lays down the principle that none else has the power of creation except God and that those who have been raised to the pedestal of Divinity have certainly created nothing how can it state that Jesus has actually created some birds. It is for this reason the Jesus’s creating birds, on which the word *ḥair* could literally be applied, is wrong, simply because it is against the plain injunctions of the Holy Qur’ān. To argue that Jesus Christ used to do it with God’s permission does not hold water, because God does not give permission that goes against His Own attributes. When the act of creation has been described as God’s exclusive attribute His grant-

ing such a permission only nullifies His own Divine attribute.¹

Thus it is not a 'novel signification' as put by Nadawī but a signification which is according to the basic teachings of the Holy Qur'ān ; this is interpreting one verse of the Holy Qur'ān in the light of other verses. If this is the crime of Muhammad 'Alī he is surely guilty of it. It is of course, for this reason that he does not give preference to the reports whose authenticity may be doubtful. Jesus Christ used to talk in figurative speech, that is why a figurative interpretation is most appropriate to these verses. Muhammad 'Alī writes in his English Commentary of the Holy Qur'ān :

“To understand the significance of this passage it is necessary to bear in mind that the chief characteristic of Jesus' speeches is that he spoke in parables and preferred to clothe his ideas in allegorical language. If this is kept in mind, there is no difficulty in interpreting this passage. The first of the statements in the passage speaks of the making of birds and breathing into them. It is perfectly intelligible if taken as a parable, but quite incomprehensible as a statement of fact. If on the one hand a prophet's dignity is much above such actions as the making of toy-birds, on the other the act of creation is not attributable to any but the Divine Being. To understand this parable, however, the several words used may be explained first. In the passage under discussion four words require to be explained : *khalq*, *ḥayāt*, *nafkḥ* and *ṭair*. The primary significance of *khalq* is *measuring, proportioning*, synonym *taqdīr* (Lane's Lexicon) hence *khalq* comes to signify the mere act of *the determining of a thing*. The word was used in this sense in pre-Islamic poetry. The act of *khalq* in the sense of creation cannot be attributed to any being except Allāh. The Holy Qur'ān has laid the greatest stress upon this point. It again and again speaks of the Divine Being as the *Creator of everything*, so that there is nothing of which any one else may be said to be a creator. And of

1. Muhammad 'Alī, *Bayān-ul-Qur'ān*, Urdū Commentary under the verse 3 : 48, p. 217, 1969 edition.

those who are taken as gods by any people, it says in particular that *they do not create anything, while they are themselves created* (16 : 20 ; 25 : 3).

Then there are the two words *ṭīn* and *naḥkḥ*. Man is spoken of as being created from *ṭīn* or *dust*, which stands for his humble origin, but the *naḥkḥ* or *breathing* into him makes him deserving of respect by the angels. This, while hinted at on various occasions, is clearly stated in 38 : 71, 72 : ‘When thy Lord said to the angels: Surely I am going to create a mortal from dust. So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit, fall down submitting to him.’ Thus it is by the breathing of Divine Spirit into man that he is made perfect.

The word *ṭair* or *ṭā’ir* means a bird, but just as the word *asad* (lit. *a lion*) is metaphorically used for *a brave man*, in a parable it is quite unobjectionable to take the word *ṭair* as signifying *one who soars into the higher spiritual regions and is not bent low upon earth or earthly things*. In 6 : 38 it is said : ‘And there is no animal (that walks) upon the earth nor a bird that flies on its two wings but (they are) genera like yourselves’, the meaning apparently being that among men there are those who only walk upon the earth and do not rise above their earthly concerns, while, others soar into the higher spiritual regions. Elsewhere (7 : 179 ; 25 ; 44), those who having hearts do not understand, and having ears do not hear, are likened to cattle. So what is meant here is that Jesus, by breathing a spirit into mortals, will make them rise above those who are bent low upon the earth, and the apostles of Jesus, who were all men of humble origin (which is referred to in the word *dust* in the parable), whose thoughts had never risen higher than their own humble cares, left everything for the master’s sake and went into the world by the command of the master preaching the truth. Here was, no doubt, mere dust having the form of a bird, which the messenger of God converted into high-soaring birds by breathing the truth into them. The fact that a story of Jesus making birds is related in a Gospel of Infancy is in no way a bar to this explanation, for it is very likely that a parable was misunderstood by

the writer of that Gospel, and the Holy Qur'ān has only referred to it to cast light upon the truth."¹

This is how Muḥammad Asad translates this verse :

“I shall fashion for you out of clay, as it were, the shape of [your] destiny, and then breathe into it, so that it might become [your] destiny by God's leave.”²

His comments on this verse are :

“The word *ṭayr* is a plural of *ṭā'ir* (‘flying creature’ or ‘bird’) or an infinitive noun (‘flying’) derived from the verb *ṭāra* (‘he flew’). In pre-Islamic usage, as well as in the Holy Qur'ān, the words *ṭā'ir* and *ṭayr* often denote ‘fortune’ or ‘destiny’, whether good or evil (as, for instance in 7 : 131, and still more clearly in 17 : 13). Many instances of this idiomatic use of *ṭayr* and *ṭā'ir* are given in all the authoritative Arabic dictionaries : see also Lane V, 1904 f. Thus, in the parabolic manner so beloved by him, Jesus intimated to children of Israel that of the humble clay of their lives he would fashion for them the vision of a soaring destiny, and that vision, brought to life by God's leave and by the strength of their faith (as pointed at the end of this verse).”³

Nadawi's objection—(Speech of Birds)

(4) “The Qur'ān mentions Solomon enumerating the favours of God unto him. He said :

‘O men, we have been taught the speech of birds, and we have been granted of all things’ (27 : 16).

Since knowledge of ‘speech of birds’ is contrary to normal human experience, Muḥammad ‘Alī considers the knowledge of speech of birds to mean Solomon's use of birds for conveying messages. In his own words :

‘Solomon's understanding of the speech of birds may imply that he made use of birds to convey messages

1. Muḥammad ‘Alī, English Commentary, pp. 144-145.

2. Muḥammad Asad, *The Message of the Holy Qur'ān*, Vol. I, pp. 98-99.

3. *Ibid.*

from one place to another, these messages being metaphorically called the speech of birds.”¹

The Analysis

Nadawī has given a part of the comments by Muḥammad ‘Alī and has left out the portion in which he gives his reason for adopting this possible interpretation of the verse. Here is what he writes :

“The root word *nuṭq*, from which the word *manṭiq* is derived, signifies originally *articulate speech* or *joined voices uttered by the tongue and kept by the ears—Rāghib*). Its use with regard to other than human beings is looked upon as a kind of metaphor, and the use of the word is allowable when one understands the significance though it may not be articulate speech—(*Rāghib*). Solomon’s understanding the speech of birds may imply the use he made of birds in conveying messages from one place to another, these messages being metaphorically called the speech of birds..... The reference here is to the great resources of Solomon’s kingdom in his victorious marches against near and distant enemies. Note also that Solomon does not speak of himself alone ; his people are included when he is made to say : *We have been taught*. This shows that his people also knew that speech.”²

Muḥammad ‘Alī is, however, careful in using his words. He says, “the speech of birds *may* imply” which implies the possibility of the other interpretations as well. To Muḥammad ‘Alī it means that Solomon knew the art of using birds for carrying messages from one place to another for the skilful management of his vast and far-flung empire.

There is no doubt in it that birds, even insects, have a certain means of communication and many people can imitate their sounds also (even these sounds can be mechanically reproduced). But in what way was it of any advantage to the kingdom of Solomon Nadawī is silent on this point?

Nadawī’s objection — (Valley of the Ants)

“(4-b) The following verse reads :

1. *Qādiānism*, p. 140.

2. Muḥammad Alī’s English Commentary, p. 730.

‘Till when they came to the valley of the ants (Naml), the ‘she-ant said : ‘O ants, enter your abodes’ (*masākin*) (27 : 18).

“Here again Muḥammad ‘Alī gives a free rein to his imagination. According to him, *Wādi-l-Naml* does not mean, as it apparently does and as it has been interpreted by exegetists, the ‘valley of ants’, but the valley of an Arab tribe called *Banū Namlah*, and the *Namlah* (she-ant) mentioned in the verse has been explained by him as follows : ‘It is the name of a tribe..... The name *Namlah* used also to be given to a child in whose hand an ant was placed at its birth, because it was said such a child would be wise and intelligent.’¹

The Analysis

Nadawī is unfair in his remarks by giving the impression that Muḥammad ‘Alī has let his imagination run wild while interpreting this verse. He knows very well that Muḥammad ‘Alī quotes his authorities at every step before giving an interpretation. One may not agree with him or with the authorities he has quoted but to say that such explanations are the mere result of his imagination is the highest injustice done to this great scholar of the Qur’ān. Here is his complete footnote on the subject :

“Many of the fables regarding Solomon have been due to a misconception of the word *naml*. It should be noted that *Wādi-l-Naml* cannot be properly translated as the *valley of the ants*, for *Naml* is a proper noun, and according to *Tāj al-‘Arūs* (see under the root *wady*), the valley of the *Naml* is situated between Jibrīn and ‘Asqalān. And *Namlah* is the name of a tribe, like *Māzin*, which literally signifies the eggs of the ants. *Namil* means *a clever man* (Tāj). The name *Namlah* used also to be given to a child in whose hands an ant was placed at its birth, because it was said such a child would be wise and intelligent (Tāj). And the *Namlah* are plainly spoken of as a tribe in the *Qāmūs*, which says under the word *barq*, *Abriqah is of the water of Namlah.*”²

1. *Qādiānism*, p. 141.

2. Muḥammad Alī's English Commentary, p. 731.

As it will be noticed Nadawī is careful in omitting the authorities Muḥammad ‘Alī quotes. He only finds it convenient to say that the other exegists have given different interpretations. But is it a sin to differ with the other exegists? And what about the differences among the exegists themselves?

It must be borne in mind that the word (مسكن), *masākin* (houses, abodes or dwellings) has been used 10 times in the Qur’ān⁵ (11 times if we include the verse under discussion). Once its singular form *maskan* has also been used (34 : 15). At none of these places it has been used for other than human abodes or dwellings (either in this life or the Hereafter). This is a strong indication that in (27 : 18) the word *masākin* should also mean human habitations.

Nadawī’s objection — (Solomons’s Death)

“(5) In the Qur’ānic chapter entitled Saba’ it has been mentioned about Solomon :

‘But when We decreed death for him, naught showed them (the *jinns*) his death except a creature of the earth who ate away his staff’ (34 : 14).

The Muslim exegists in explaining this verse point out that Solomon was having his temple constructed by *jinns*. When he came to know that the time of his death had arrived, he explained the plan of construction to the *Jinns*, shut himself up in a house of glass, and devoted himself to the worship of God. In this state, the angel took the breath of life out of him. His corpse lay standing by the support of a wooden staff. The *jinns* kept on working for long. None sensed that Solomon had died. When the construction was completed, the staff which had supported his corpse fell down because of its having been eaten up by a moth. It was then that his death became known. The *jinns* also realised the limitations of their knowledge of the Unseen. Their human followers too came to

5. The Qur’ān, 9 : 24, 72 ; 14 : 45 ; 20 : 128 ; 21 : 13 ; 28 : 59 ; 29 : 38 ; 32 : 26 ; 46 : 25 ; 61 : 12.

realise that had the *jinn*s become aware of Solomon's death by virtue of their capacity to know the Unseen, they would have got rid of the humiliation they endured so long.

Now, since all this could be accepted only if supernatural things are affirmed, Muhammad 'Alī again comes forward with a strange explanation. This is what he has to say on the question :¹

“The reference in *the creature of the earth that ate away his staff* is to his son's weak rule, under whom the kingdom of Solomon went to pieces. It appears that Solomon's successor, Rehoboam, led a life of luxury and ease, and instead of acting on the advice of the older men, he yielded to the pleasure-seeking wishes of his companions (1 Kings 12 : 13), and it is to his luxurious habits and easy mode of life that the Holy Qur'ān refers when it calls him *a creature of the earth*. The eating away of his staff signifies the disruption of the kingdom. The jinn, as already remarked, mean the rebellious tribes who had been reduced to subjection by Solomon, and who remained in subjection to the Israelites for a time, until the kingdom was shattered. This instance, as well as the one following, contains a warning for the Muslims as to the result of falling into luxury and ease, by which, however, they benefited little ; the ultimate fate of the respective kingdoms of the Umayyads and Abbasides was the same as that of Solomon's kingdom” (p. 825).

The footnote No. 2141 reads as follows :

“By the *mere body* that was put on his throne is meant either his son Rehoboam, who lost the allegiance of all except a single tribe of Israel (1 Kings 12 : 17), or Jeroboam, who led the revolt against the house of David, and, on becoming king of ten tribes, set up image-worship in Dan and Beth-el, the two calves being supposed to be images

1. To save the trouble of repetition I have quoted this passage in full. Nadawī has stopped at the words: “..until the kingdom was shattered.” See *Qadiānism*, p. 141. It should be noted that the 'Allāma Al-Marāghī, an Arab Commentator, has also rejected the standing of corpse by the support of a wooden staff for full one year.

of Jehovah (I Kings 12 : 28), and also began the worship of molten images (I Kings 14 : 9). Thus both Rehoboam and Jeroboam answer the description of a *body* (without real life) thrown on Solomon's throne" (p. 872 under 38 : 34).¹

If, however, Nadawī does not agree with M. 'A.'s interpretation here is the one given by one of his "great Islamic scholars."²

The *Maulāna* 'Abdul Ḥaqq Ḥaqqānī after giving the common interpretation of this incident writes :

"The other meaning is that God had decreed death for Solomon, that is he would die at a particular time. No body knew it except a creature of the earth. It was only manifested by the termite which was eating up the *life-staff* of Solomon. When the decreed hour approached the life-staff was cut off and Solomon fell down. Then every body knew, so did the Jinns, that they were in fact not the knowers of the Unseen. If they really knew Solomon's time of death they could not have remained in his subjugation. *The creature of earth by way of metaphor, means cutting of the span of life and staff* *عمره* signifies his age and good fortune by which Solomon ruled. Alas ! the life-staff of every one is being eaten up by termite or weevil but we the ignorant do not realize it before it breaks down."³

(Italics are mine).

The passage is clear enough to destroy Nadawī's hypothesis in which he vainly asserts :

"None of the profound scholars of Arabic and its literature can even imagine that these verses could, by any stretch of imagination, mean what this non-Arab scholar thinks what they mean, almost for the first time after more than thirteen hundred years."⁴

I leave it to the reader to judge for himself how far the *Maulānā* Nadawī, who calls himself a "student of history" has maintained his so-called "unprejudiced"

1. I have again taken the liberty of quoting the passage in full, half of which has been left out by Nadawī.

2. Nadawī, *Muslims in India*, p. 93.

3. *Tafseer Ḥaqqānī* in Urdū under v. 34 Saba' 14, published by Kutub Khāna Na'īmīyah, Deoband, U.P., India.

4. *Qādiānism*, p. 144.

approach towards understanding the literature of the Aḥmadiyyah Movement.

Nadawi's objection — (Hudhud)

“(6) Another example of the same trend is his explanation of the following verse :

‘And he reviewed the birds, then said : How is it I see not *Hudhud* or is it that he is one of the absentees’ (The Qur’ān, 27 : 20).

The word *hudhud* has been understood as signifying a particular species of birds. The same view is corroborated by the context because a little earlier there is a mention of Solomon’s knowledge of the speech of birds and, again, since it is the birds that he is reviewing. But since it is not normal that a human being should converse with a bird and call it to account, and the bird should explain its conduct before him, Muḥammad ‘Alī let his imagination loose and interpreted *hudhud* as the chief officer of Solomon’s Department of Intelligence. He wrote :

‘The opening words may mean either a review of birds or a review of horses ; see 1846. By *Hudhud* is not to be understood the *lapwing*, but a *person of that name*. In every language many of the proper names given to men will be found to be identical with the names of animals. The Arab writers speak of a king of Himyar as *Hudad* (*Lisān al-‘Arab*) which is almost identical with *Hudhud* mentioned in the Holy Qur’ān. The Bible speaks of a king of Syria, named Ben Hadad (I Kings 15 : 18, etc). The *Muntaha-l-Arab* states that *Hudhad* was the name of the father of Balqīs, the queen of Sheba. According to *Lisān al-‘Arab* *Hudhud* is also written as *Hudāhad*, and *Hudāhad* and *Hadad* was the name of a tribe in Yaman. This shows that there is nothing strange in such a name being given to men. The verses that follow show clearly that Solomon was speaking of one of his own officers : the infliction of severe punishment on a small bird by such a mighty monarch, as Solomon, and the exposition

of the great religious doctrine of the Unity by the *lapwing*, are quite incomprehensible' (pp. 731-32).

In his Urdu *Tafsīr* he elaborates the situation, pointing out that Hudhud was an intelligence officer and that when Solomon reviewed the birds who were used to carry on intelligence work, he found the officer of the intelligence department *Hudhud* absent. See his *Tafsīr al-Bayān*, vol. III, p. 1413.

The Analysis

If we look carefully at the verses of the Holy Qur'ān we find the following characteristics being mentioned about Hudhud which cannot be ascribed to anyone except a human being :

1. Solomon asks him to explain clearly the reasons of his being absent (27 : 21). Only a human being can do that.

2. If it was a small tiny bird, it does not seem befitting that a mighty monarch like Solomon should get so angry and threaten to inflict severe penalty on it even going to the extent of executing it (27 : 21).

3. Hudhud seems to be aware of the religion of the people of Saba', who worshipped the heavenly bodies, and that Satan had made their deeds seem pleasing in their eyes and kept them away from the path of guidance (27 : 24).

4. In this particular field he knew more than what Solomon knew (27 : 22).

6. He was also aware of the concept of the Divine Unity and the evils of polytheism.

6. He is suspected of telling lies (27 : 25). Birds are not known to tell lies. This lack of moral quality is only a characteristic of human beings.

7. He seems to be well aware of the manners and requirements of the royal courts (27 : 28).

8. It is admitted by all that Hudhud had been the name of persons and tribes. This name was so popular that even the father of Queen Sheba was called Hudhud.

9. And *Hoopoe* or *Hudhud* is not a migratory bird and is unable to fly long distances. Solomon, therefore, could not have selected him for a journey to Sheba and back.

Thus *Hudhud* was not a bird but an important official of Solomon's army. The birds were used for carrying the messages from one place to another and *Hudhud* might have been the incharge of that department.

Sometimes it is said that Solomon's threat that "I will kill him" ذبحناه *azbahannahu* (*lit. I will slaughter him*) is a mode of expression used for animals and not for human beings. This is, however, not correct. Note the following examples :

ذبح بعضهم بعضاً

Zabaḥa ba'du-hum ba'dan i.e. they slaughtered, or slew, one another.

أخذهم بنو فلان بالذباح

Akhaza-hum banū-fulān-in bīzzubāḥi, i.e. the sons of such a one slaughtered, or slew them.¹

In the Holy Qur'ān it is stated :

"And when We delivered you from Pharaoh's people, who subjected you to severe torment, killing يذبحون *yuzabbihūna* (*lit. slaughtering*) your sons."²

Another objection raised in this connection is Solomon's utterance about his letter to *Hudhud* :

فألقه إليهم *fa-alqih ilaihim*, thou deliver it to them, (*lit. throw it towards them*) which, it is argued, is not expected of a human delegate.

Although the word الإلقاء *al-ilqā'* commonly means to throw or cast but its original meaning is "to put a thing before a person in such a way that it could be seen."³ Again they say in Arabic :

القيت إليه المودة

alqaitu ilaihi'l mawaddah

1. Lane's Lexicon.

2. The Holy Qur'ān 2 *Baqarah* 49.

3. *Mufridāt of Rāghib*.

“I offered or tendered to him, or gave or granted him love, or affection.”¹

The Holy Qur’ān says :

“O you who believe, take not My enemy and your enemy for friends. Would you offer them love :

تلقون اليهم بالمودة

(*tuḥqūna ilaihim b’il-mawaddati*).’’²

Thus in 27 : 21 قالق اليهم (*fa alqih ilaihim*) could mean : thou deliver it to them, or give it to them, or place it before them in such a way that they could see.

Nadawi’s Last Objection — (The Jinn)

“(7) The Holy Qur’ān mentions the existence of a distinct species called *Jinn*, *inter alia*, in the following verse :

‘Say : It has been revealed to me that a party of the *jinn* listened, so they said : Surely we have heard a wonderful Qur’ān’ (72 : 1).

The testimonies of the Holy Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth, the continuity of Muslim belief, as well as human observations, are too overwhelming on the question to warrant the denial of existence of a separate species of ethereal beings. Muḥammad ‘Alī too could not explicitly reject this belief as erroneous. He merely seems to evade the question. He tries, therefore, to give other meanings of the term, depending upon the context in which the term occurs. At one place he considers the word *jinn* to signify ‘great potentates or powerful leaders who through their importance and detachment from the masses, do not mix freely with them so they remain distant or hidden from their eyes’. No less strange is his feat of imagination in trying to explain that the term in the Qur’ānic verse mentioned above refers to Christians (p. 1107). He regards the opening verse of this chapter as prophetic, ‘speaking of some future

1. Lane’s Lexicon.

2. The Qur’ān 60 *Mumtaḥanah* 1, “ye give them friendship” (Pickthall).

time when Christian nations forming the *bulk of mankind*—such being one of the significance of the word *jinn*, (Lane's Lexicon)—will accept truth of the message brought by the Prophet' (p. 1107)."¹

The Analysis

The first charge laid by Nadawī is about the existence of Jinn. "Muhammad 'Alī seems to evade the question", he says. On the contrary Muḥammad 'Alī begins his footnote on 72 : 1 with the following words :

*"The existence of jinn, or ethereal beings like the angels (the former being the spirits of evil and the latter the spirits of good), is a question quite distinct, but it is clear that the jinn spoken of here did not belong to this class."*² (Italics are mine).

The first part of the italicised statement explicitly shows that Muḥammad 'Alī believes in the existence of Jinn as ethereal beings. If more proof is needed I quote a few other passages from his writings :

*"In man's creation from dust there also seems to be a reference to his low and humble origin and to his temperate nature, as opposed to another kind of creation of a fiery nature, which is called the jinn or the devil."*³ (Italics are mine).

*"Thus the word jinn stands here either for the devil, or for the genii."*⁴

*"The word jinn is derived from janna meaning he covered or concealed, or hid, or protected. The class of beings that goes under this name stands in the Holy Qur'an for the spirits of evil or the beings that invite man to evil, as opposed to the angels, who invite him to good, both being alike invisible to the human eye."*⁵

1. *Qādiānism*, p. 143.

2. M. 'A's English Commentary, pp. 1106-7.

3. *Ibid.*, footnote under v. 15 : 57, p. 511.

4. *Ibid.*, footnote under v. 6 : 101, p. 300.

5. *Ibid.*, footnote under v. 6 : 129, p. 306.

“Jinn Satan is he who is hidden from the eye.”¹

“Jinn is that species which cannot be seen by the human eye and he is hidden from it. From this kind is *iblis* (devil) as stated in the Holy Qur’ān, ‘he was from among the jinn’ (18 : 50).”²

“At another place it has been stated in a general way, ‘and the Jinn, We created before of intensely hot fire’ (15 : 27). This earth itself was a ball of fire, therefore, it is quite possible that the first creation here should also be like that. And because of their being created from fire they are invisible beings.”³

About seeing the jinn he says :

“They can be seen with a spiritual eye.”⁴

Thus Muḥammad ‘Alī is not evading the issue. He has made his stand clear with regard to these ethereal beings. But at the same time he also admits the wider use of this term in the Holy Qur’ān and the Arabic literature. It is these ‘other meanings’ which Nadawī objects. Here is the relevant part of the footnote which Nadawī has insufficiently quoted :

“The word *jinn* is derived from *janna*, meaning *he covered* or *concealed* or *hid* or *protected*. The class of beings that goes under this name stands in the Holy Qur’ān for the spirits of evil or the beings that invite man to evil, as opposed to the angels, who invite him to good, both being alike invisible to the human eye. But there is a wider use of the word in Arabic literature as well as in the Holy Qur’ān. One signification of the word is explained in 2510, and I would refer to that footnote. But the word is also applied in the Holy Qur’ān to great potentates or powerful leaders who, through their importance and detachment from the masses, do not mix freely with them so they remain distant or ‘hidden from their eyes.’ In Arabic literature such a use was permitted. A verse of Mūsā Ibn Jābir

1. M.‘A.’s Urdū Commentary, *Bayān-ul-Qur’an* under v. 6 : 113, p. 485, New edition 1969.

2. *Ibid.*, under v. 6 : 130, p. 489.

3. *Ibid.*, under v. 7 : 12, p. 504.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 508.

in which the word *jinn* occurs, is thus explained by Lane's Lexicon on the authority of Tabrezī on Ḥam: "*And my companions, who were like the Jinn, did not flee when I came to them and informed them*", where the word *jinn* is translated *companions who were like the jinn*. And Tabrezī says further that *the Arabs liken a man who is sharp and clever in affairs to a jinnī and a shaiṭān* and hence they say *nafarat jinnu-hū* (literally, *his jinn fled away*) meaning *he became weak and abject*. Therefore a man's companion, without whose help he would be weak and abject, was called a *jinnī*."¹

Nadawī gives the impression that Muḥammad 'Alī is arbitrary in his opinions, whereas M.'A. quotes his authorities which Nadawī finds it convenient to omit, for lack of space perhaps, or perhaps it is easy for him to take shelter behind the undefined terms of "Muslim belief", "human observations", etc. which most probably relate to his own personal beliefs and observations.

It is true that the verse 72 : 1 in its context, according to Muḥammad 'Alī, refers to some Christians. About this Nadawī remarks :

"No less strange is his feat of imagination in trying to explain that the term in the Qur'ānic verse mentioned above refers to Christians."²

Let us first know Muḥammad 'Alī's "strange" opinion on this subject. He writes :

"The existence of *jinn*, or ethereal beings like the angels (the former being the spirits of evil and the latter the spirits of good), is a question quite distinct, but it is clear that the *jinn* spoken of here did not belong to this class ; see 822 for full explanation of the word. The *jinn* are also referred to in 46 : 29-31, where they are made to say, 'Our people we have listened to a Book revealed after Moses, verifying that which is before it'. This shows that they

1. M.'A.'s English Commentary under v : 6 129, p. 306.

2. *Qādiānism*, p. 143.

were Jews. The *jinn* spoken of here are evidently Christians, as v. 3 shows.”¹

Muḥammad ‘Alī refers to 72 : 3 which reads :

“And He — exalted be the majesty of our Lord! — has not taken a consort, nor a son.”

God’s taking a son has been a Christian doctrine which has been strongly rejected by the Holy Qur’ān (see 18 : 4 ; 19 : 88-92 ; 111 : 3, etc.). It is quite possible that these *Jinns* believed in the Christian doctrine. Here is what the favourite commentator of Nadawī says about this verse (72 : 3) :

“Ḥaḍrat Shāh Ṣāhib² writes that ‘errors’ which were prevalent among men were also found among Jinns : (*like Christians*) they attributed wife and son to Allah.”³ (Italics are mine).

According to ‘Usmānī these Jinns were *like Christians* in their beliefs, whereas Muḥammad ‘Alī says that they were Christians. How close they come inadvertently ! But Nadawī finds M.‘A.’s interpretation a strange feat of imagination” and “distortion”.

There is, however, another indication that these Jinns were human beings. The verse 72 : 6 says :

“And persons (*rijāl*) from among men used to seek refuge with persons (*rijāl*) from among the jinn.”

The word رجال *rijāl* (pl. of رجل *rajul-un*) is used twenty-six times (with the exception of this word being used twice in 72 : 6) ; its singular form *rajul-un* twenty-four times and the dual five times. Everywhere these words have been used for human beings in the Holy Qur’ān. In the dictionary it has been mentioned : *rajul-un* means a man, i.e. male of the human species the opposite of *imra’atun* woman. In this light the verse may signify that some

1. M.‘A.’s English Commentary pp. 1106-7.

2. Shāh ‘Abdul Qādir whom ‘Usmānī shows great respect as a Translator and Commentator of the Qur’ān.

3. Shabbīr Aḥmad ‘Usmānī’s Urdū Commentary of the Qur’ān, p. 982.

men from the common folk— weaker ones in intellect— used to seek the protection of some men from among the *Jinn*—leaders and influential men, and they thus increased the latter in arrogance. Muḥammad 'Alī says :

“The *jinn* and men of this verse are undoubtedly the leaders of evil and iniquity and the weaker ones in intellect who followed them blindly.”¹

In the conflicting reports (*aḥādīṣ*) about this incident one of them mentions that later the Prophet showed his companions the place where Jinns stayed at night and they (i.e. the Companions) saw their traces and the fire-places.² Why should the invisible spirits leave traces behind and their fire-places where they obviously cooked their meals ?

An old commentary of the Holy Qur'ān, besides other interpretations also states that these *Jinns* were nine persons from Naṣībain who were sent by the Prophet towards their community as missionaries.”³

Perhaps it should not be out of place here to mention a modern commentator of the Holy Qur'ān also. Yūsuf 'Alī is a little hesitant in coming forward with his own views but he cannot help stating the possibility that Jinns may mean “strangers” :

“We may take these (i.e. *Jinns*, T.) to be spirits ordinarily unseen, or people who were strangers in Arabia, but had in their own private way heard and believed in the Gospel of Islam.”⁴ (Italics are mine).

He is more explicit at another place where he calls them *some unfamiliar class of men.*⁵

If Nadawī believes in folk-lore stories and romances like the *Arabian Nights* where jinns become personified in fantastic forms and views the Qur'ānic verses in that

1: M.'A.'s English Commentary, p. 1107.

2. *Tirmizī*.

3. *Fatḥ-ul-Bayān*, vol. 8, p. 355 by Abu'l Tayyib Siddīq ibn Ḥasan See also *Durr Manṣūr* by Sayūti.

4. Yūsuf 'Alī's Commentary under v. 72 1, p. 1625, 1946 edition.

5. *Ibid.*, under v. 46 : 29, p. 1375.

light we are not concerned with his personal convictions which do not find the least support in the Holy Qur'ān. Muḥammad 'Alī's method is to interpret one part of the Holy Qur'ān in the light of the other sections of the Holy Book. This method, at all costs should be given precedence over everything else.

It shall not be forgotten at this stage that Muḥammad 'Alī, unlike Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, is not a denier of the existence of jinn as has been shown above. But he does accept the use of the term in a wider sense. Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān's attitude is different and here the two scholars stand poles apart. It is unfair to bracket them together. Whenever the occasion demands Muḥammad 'Alī refutes Sir Sayyid's views. Thus quotation by the Founder of the Ahmadiyyah Movement about Sir Sayyid's Commentary does not in any way apply to Muḥammad 'Alī's commentary.

Chapter IV

NADAWĪ'S CRITICISM OF MUḤAMMAD 'ALĪ'S COMMENTARY—C

The *Maulānā* Nadawī in his English and Urdū versions of his book has quoted only seven verses of the Qur'ān to reject MuḤammad 'Alī's Commentary. (These verses have been discussed by me in detail in the previous chapter). In the Arabic edition of his book (which is the original work—English and Urdū editions being more or less translations) he has quoted several other verses. In this chapter I will discuss some of them. In the Arabic edition he has not made separate comments on each verse. But judging his tone in the English book I presume that he would have expressed the same views, as he has done in English, had he time to go into details of the subject matter. Nadawī's case and his adherence to the 'orthodox' interpretation of the Qur'ān has been faithfully presented by me. But as has been shown before, his so-called appeal to the orthodox stand is as fragile as his accusation that MuḤammad 'Alī has reduced the Qur'ān to a plaything. I leave it to the reader to judge it for himself, by studying the discussion which follows, how far Nadawī can maintain his position as a fair-minded critic of MuḤammad 'Alī's works. Let us ponder over the following verses of the Qur'ān :

(1) Moses's order : 'kill your own people' !

*“And when Moses said to his people, you have surely wronged yourselves by taking the calf (for a god), so turn to your Creator (penitently) and kill your passions (faqtulū anfusa-kum). This is best for you with your Creator. So He turned to you (mercifully). Surely He is Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful.”*¹

MuḤammad 'Alī has translated the words *فَاذْكُوا* *انفُسَكُمْ* (*faqtulū anfusa-kum*) *kill your passions,* whereas according to

1. The Qur'ān 2 *Baqarah* 54.

Nadawī they should mean *kill yourselves* i.e. kill your own people, so that this translation may conform to the Biblical version where the children of Levi were told :

“And slay everyman his brother...and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.”¹

Muḥammad ‘Alī has not denied the possibility of this literal interpretation and writes in his Urdu commentary :

“Possibly this incident may have occurred and the Holy Qur’ān may have referred to it in the words *فاقتلوا انفسكم* (*faqtulū anfusa-kum*) *slay yourselves*, i.e. kill your own people who were the ring-leaders of this blasphemy and were responsible for leading the other people astray. But the other meaning which has also been given by Imām Rāghib² i.e. *qatl* (*kill*) of *self* means the killing of passions, seems preferable according to the text of the Holy Qur’ān.”³

Notwithstanding what the other commentators have said, Muḥammad ‘Alī writes in his English commentary (and mark his reasons for supporting Imām Rāghib’s interpretation) :

“According to the Bible, the children of Levi were commanded to slay the others, and three thousand men were killed on that day. On the basis of this Bible story the words *faqtulū anfusa-kum* occurring here have been translated as meaning kill your people. The context does not allow this interpretation.

1. Exodus 32, 27-28.

2. It surprises me, over again and again, at the tall claim by Nadawī that Muḥammad ‘Alī has ‘reduced the Holy Qur’ān to a play-thing’ (*Qādiānism*, p. 145 Eng. ed.) and that he was making such comments ‘almost for the first time after more than thirteen hundred years’ (*Ibid.*, p. 144). It is, however, interesting to note that he has omitted the name of Imām Rāghib from his comments from the Arabic edition of his book. The reason is obvious. He did not like to demolish his own hypothesis about Muḥammad ‘Alī’s commentary. This is another instance of his ‘objectivity’ and his historian’s ‘detached outlook’ and his ‘unprejudiced conclusion’ ! (*Ibid.*, p. 11).

3. Muḥammad ‘Alī, *Bayān-ul-Qur’ān*, vol. 1, p. 65 ; or p. 41, 1969 edition.

In the first place, the words are preceded by an order to repent and it could not be followed by an order to kill.

Secondly, the words that follow are, 'so He turned to you mercifully,' and an order to kill three thousand people could not be called a merciful dealing.

Thirdly, it has already been made clear in v. 52 that God pardoned them for the offence of taking the calf for a god: 'Then he pardoned you after that so that you might give thanks.' They could not be asked to give thanks for being killed. The order to kill is inconsistent with the statement that they were pardoned.

Fourthly, when the same incident is narrated elsewhere, there is a clear statement that they were granted a pardon and there is no mention of killing: 'Then they took the calf for a god, after clear signs had come to them, but We pardoned this' (4 : 153).

Fifthly, according to the Holy Qur'ān even Sāmīrī the leader of calf-worship, was not killed and was dismissed simply with the order 'Begone ! Surely for thee in this life it would be to say, Touch me not' (20 : 97).

Hence the Holy Qur'ān rejects the Bible story of the Israelites being killed as a punishment for calf-worship. They were pardoned and were told simply to repent, and God accepted their repentance as clearly stated here. Therefore *anfusa-kum* does not mean here your people, but your desires or your passions, for the word *nafs*, of which *anfus* is the plural, means not only self or soul but also intention, desire or passion. In fact, it was an order not to kill but to mortify, and this is the only interpretation which can be given to these words consistent with the clear mention of God's pardoning them and turning to them mercifully. I may add that no prophet or religion has ever taught that a man can be killed for the worship of an object other than God."¹

Spiritualised version accepted by other commentators

It will be interesting to note that many other modern

1. Muḥammad 'Alī, English Commentary, pp. 26, 27, under v. 2 *Baqarah* 54.

commentators and translators are falling in line with what Muḥammad ‘Alī has said on the subject.

Al-Ḥājj Ḥāfiẓ Ghulām Sarwar: “And mortify each one of his soul”.¹

Dr. Syed ‘Abdul Latīf: “And mortify your souls.”²

Yūsuf ‘Alī after giving the literal interpretation writes:

“A more spiritualised version would be that the order for slaying was given by way of trial, but was withdrawn for God turned to them in forgiveness. A still more spiritualised way of construing it would be to take *anfusa-kum* as meaning ‘souls’ not ‘selves’. Then the sense of Moses’ speech (abbreviated) would be: ‘By the worship of the calf you have wronged your own souls; mortify (=slay) your souls now; it will be better in the sight of God.’”³

Muḥammad Asad writes:

“‘Kill yourselves’ or, according to some commentators, ‘kill one another.’ This literal interpretation (probably based on the Biblical account in Exodus 32: 26-28) is not however, convincing in view of the immediately preceding call to repentance and the subsequent statement that this repentance was accepted by God. I incline, therefore, to the interpretation given by ‘Abd al-Jabbār (quoted by Rāzī in his commentary on this verse) to the effect that the expression ‘kill yourselves’, is here used in a metaphorical sense (*majāzan*), i.e., mortify yourselves.”⁴

(2) Life of the Israelites after ‘death’

“Then We raised you up after your death (or stupor) that you might give thanks.”⁵

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1. Ghulām Sarwar, Translation of the Holy Qur’ān, p. 5, 1st ed.
 2. ‘Abdul Latīf, Al-Qur’ān rendered into English, p. 6, published by the Academy of Islamic Studies, Hyderabad, India, 1969 edition.
 3. Yūsuf ‘Alī, English Commentary, p. 30, One Vol. ed., 1946.
 4. Muḥammad Asad, *The Message of the Holy Qur’ān*, vol. 1, p. 16.
 5. The Qur’ān 2 *Baqarah* 54.

The *Maulānā* Muḥammad 'Alī writes in his Urdū commentary :

“What is the significance of life of the Israelites after death ? In the previous verse it was stated that ‘*the lightning overtook you*’. Death was, however, not caused by lightning is clear from the words *وانتم تنظرون wa antum tanzurūna*, while you looked on. ‘Looking on,’ proves that they were alive. To solve this problem the commentators have suggested that the half of them died first while the other half ‘looked on.’ Then the dead were raised to life and the other half died. This is rather unnecessary stretching of the words. The expression *maut* here means the loss of senses. The intensity of earthquake caused them to lose their senses which God later restored to them. Or it could also mean the deprivation of the intellectual faculty, i.e., their question was based on stupidity and they were suffering with the death of ignorance and God brought them out of this state and gave them the light of faith. We find mentioned in the Holy Qur’ān :

او من كان ميتاً فأحييناه و جعلنا له نوراً يمشى به في الناس

“Is he who was dead,¹ then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people.” (6 An‘ām 123). The granting of this light of faith was as if life was given to him. These meanings have been given in the commentary *Rūh-ul-Ma‘ānī* by Sayyid Maḥmūd al-Alūsī as well and it has been stated that in prose and poetry such usage is acceptable...In *Ibn Jarīr* a saying has been recorded that *Summa ba‘asnākum* (*We raised you*) means *We raised prophets among you* as the word *ba‘as* is also used for raising the prophets.”²

It is significant that Nadawī has entirely omitted the mention of *Rūh-ul-Ma‘ānī* and *Ibn Jarīr* in his comments.

The word ‘maut’ does not always mean physical death

In his English commentary Muḥammad 'Alī writes :

1. *Shabbīr Aḥmad* ‘Usmānī admits that death here means “the death of ignorance and vice” (p. 251). The same view is held by Maudūdī (*Tafhīm-ul-Qur’ān* Vol. I, p. 578) and ‘Abdul Mājid Daryābādī (Eng. Commentary Vol. 1, p. 255).

2. Muḥammad 'Alī, *Bayān-ul-Qur’ān*, Vol. 1, p. 66 (or p. 42, 1969 edition).

“The word *mawt* does not always mean cessation of life. It also signifies *loss of sensation, deprivation of intellectual faculties, experiencing great grief and sorrow, sleep, etc.* (Rāghib, Lane). The *mawt* mentioned in this verse refers to temporary loss of sensation, because on the same occasion Moses is spoken of as having fallen down ‘in swoon’ (7 A’rāf 143), and the statement is followed by the words ‘when he recovered’. A similar fate overtook his companions.”¹

About this verse Muḥammad Asad writes :

“‘After the death’. The expression *mawt* does not always denote physical death. Arab philologist e.g., Rāghib — explains the verb *māta* (lit. ‘he died’) as having, in certain contexts, the meaning of ‘he became deprived of sensation, dead as to the senses’ ; and occasionally as ‘deprived of the intellectual faculty, intellectually dead’ ; and sometimes even as ‘he slept, (see Lane VII, 2741).’²

(3) Raising of the mountain above the Israelites

“*And when We made a covenant with you and raised the mountain above you.*”³

Some of the commentators, under the influence of Israelitish stories, say that the mountain was literally suspended over the heads of the Israelites. Sayyid Abul A’lā Maudūdī, unlike other commentators, is not emphatic at all on this interpretation. He concludes by saying that “*the Israelites felt the mountain was going to fall on them.*” Here is his complete foot-note :

“The way this incident has been narrated at different places in the Holy Qur’ān clearly shows that at that time this was considered to be an important and well-known incident among the Israelites, but now it is difficult to know its detailed account. In short it should be understood like this that at the time of taking the covenant at the foot of the mountain such a frightful condition was created that they (i.e. the Israelites) felt as if the mountain was going to fall on them.”⁴

1. Muḥammad ‘Alī, English Commentary, p. 27.

2. Muḥammad Asad, *The Message of the Holy Qur’ān*, p. 16.

3. The Holy Qur’ān, 2 Baqarah 63.

4. Abul A’lā Maudūdī, *Tafhīm-ul-Qur’ān*, Vol. 1, p. 83.

Yūsuf 'Alī is also careful in totally accepting the Israelitish version :

“Under thunder and lightning the Mountain must indeed have appeared an awe-inspiring sight above the camp at its foot.”¹

In fact (*rafa'-nā*) *we raised* does not necessarily mean that we lifted something and suspended it over your head. It could also mean ‘we made a thing tower above another standing beside it’. It is mentioned in a saying of the Prophet, as has been mentioned in Muḥammad 'Alī's *Bayān-ul-Qur'ān* :

فرفعت لنا صخرة

“which has been translated in *Majma' Bihār al-Anwār* by Shaikh Muḥammad Ṭāhir of Gujrāt

ظهرت الابصارنا

i.e. ‘the rock appeared before our eyes.’ Literally it should have been ‘the rock was lifted for us’. But in fact the rock was not raised, only its height appeared before the eyes”²

In another ḥadīth it is stated :

رفع لنا صخرة طويلة لها ظل

i.e. “a big stone giving good shade was raised above us”, which means that we found ourselves beside a shady stone.³

Similarly *fauqa-kum* (*fauqa-kum*) *above you* can be used literally and figuratively.⁴

The Holy Qur'ān says :

اذ جاء وكم من فوقكم و من اسفل منكم

“When they came upon you and from above you and from below you.”⁵

While interpreting this verse 'Usmānī says :

1. Yūsuf 'Alī, English Commentary, p. 34.

2. Muḥammad 'Alī *Bayān-ul-Qur'ān*, Urdū Commentary, under v: 2 : 63 ; (p. 47 in 1969 ed.).

3. *Bukhārī*, ch. *Hijrah*.

4. *Aqrab al-Mawārid* (Arabic Dictionary) by Sa'id al-Khaurī & Shartūti.

5. The Qur'ān, 33 Aḥzāb 10.

From *above you* mean “the eastern side of Medina which is high.”¹

The Qur’an does not support the baseless story that the mountain was suspended in mid-heaven over the Israelites

It should be borne in mind that Muḥammad ‘Alī is not denying at all God’s power of inverting the mountain over somebody’s head. What he says is, which Nadawī does not like, that such a baseless story is not supported by the words of the Holy Qur’ān. Here is what he writes on the subject :

“There is nothing in the words of the Holy Qur’ān to support the baseless story that the mountain was suspended in mid-heaven over the head of the Israelites to frighten them into submission (see 957). The use of the word *raf‘* is in accordance with the Arabic idiom, for it signifies the *rearing*, or *uprearing* of building, or *making it high or lofty* (Rāghib, *Lane’s Lexicon*). In this sense the word is used in v. 127 : “And when Abraham and Ishmael *raised* the foundation of the House.”²

“957 The stories built upon these simple words by some commentators must be rejected. The words simply relate the experience of the elders of Israel when they stood at the foot of the mountain, which rose above them. There was severe earthquake, which is referred to in 7 : 155, causing them to think that the mountain would fall upon them”.³

After these clear explanations, I wonder who would believe in Nadawī’s accusation against Muḥammad ‘Alī that :

“None of the profound scholars of Arabic and its literature can even imagine that these verses could, by any stretch of imagination, mean what this non-Arab scholar thinks what they mean, almost for the first time after more than thirteen hundred years.”⁴

1. Shabbīr Aḥmad ‘Usmānī, *Urdū Commentary*, p. 719, under v. 33 : 10.

2. Muḥammad ‘Alī, *English Commentary*, p. 31, under v. 2 : 63.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 355, under v. 7 : 171.

4. *Qādiānism* (English Ed.) p. 144.

(4) Sabbath breakers turned into apes ('Usmani's view)

“And indeed you know those among you who violated the Sabbath, so We said to them : Be (as) apes, despised and hated.”¹

According to the *Maulānā Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Usmānī* these Sabbath-breakers were actually turned into apes. Thus he writes :

“Those who forbade them hunting, stopped meeting the hunters and raised a wall against them. One day when they looked over the wall and lo, there were monkeys in every house. These monkeys recognised their kith and kin and laid their heads on their feet and wept. All of them died in a miserable condition after three days”.²

Some commentators think that they were transformed into apes with tails.³

Haqqānī's view : their faces swelled and became disfigured like those of monkeys

The *Maulānā 'Abdul Ḥaqq Ḥaqqānī*, who is also considered a great Islamic scholar by Nadawī⁴ says :

“God sent His curse on them in the form of plague and with the intensity of the swelling their faces became disfigured like those of monkeys and in three days thousands of people died”.⁵

Ḥaqqānī believes that on account of the heavy swelling their faces became *like* those of the monkeys.

Transformation may have taken place only in morals

'Abdul Mājīd Daryābādī in his English commentary⁶ comes much nearer to Muḥammad 'Alī's interpretation when he says :

“There are several points to note. In the first place, the Holy Qur'ān does not say whether the sentence was

1. The Qur'ān, 2 Baqarah 65 ; 7 A'rāf 166.

2. *Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Usmānī*, Urdū Commentary, p. 298, under v. 7: 166.

3. Ibn Kasīr.

4. *Abul Ḥasan 'Alī Nadawī*, *Muslims in India*, p. 93.

5. *Tafsīr Ḥaqqānī*, under v. 2 : 65.

6. In his Urdū Commentary he sticks to the literal interpretation!

actually carried out, or ultimately rescinded on the transgressors' repentance, some commentators adopting the latter suggestion. Secondly, *the transformation may have taken place only in manners and morals as held by some commentators, and not physically.* Thirdly, the Holy Qur'ān only argues from the Jews' knowledge of and their credence in such an event, *لقد علمتم* ('Ye know it perfectly well') and itself says nothing about its occurrence or otherwise."¹

(Italics are mine).

Views of Muhammad 'Alī and other commentators

Yusūf 'Alī is, however, not sure of the right interpretation. He therefore takes the middle course bringing Muḥammad 'Alī to his aid as well. He writes :

'There must have been a Jewish tradition about a whole fishing community in a sea-side town, which persisted in breaking the Sabbath and were turned into apes : cf vii 163-166. Or should we translate in both these passages 'Be as apes', instead of 'Be apes' ? This is the suggestion of the Maulvī Muḥammad 'Alī on this passage, on the authority of Mujāhid and Ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī"²

Rashīd Ridā' in his Arabic commentary *al-Manār* has given the same interpretation which has been put forward by Muḥammad 'Alī.³

Now let us see what the *Maulānā* Muḥammad 'Alī says about this verse about which Nadawī is so vexed with him.

"Mujāhid explains this in the following words : '*They were not transformed or metamorphosed ; it is only a parable which Allah has set forth for them, the like of what he has set forth in likening them to asses*' (62 : 5), i.e., *their hearts were transformed, not that they were metamorphosed into apes (Ibn Jarīr).* The verse that follows lends support to this explanation as a monkey could not afford a lesson to

1. 'Abdul Mājid Daryābādī, English Commentary p. 22, under v. 2. 65.

2. Yūsuf 'Alī, English Commentary, p. 34, under v. 2 : 65.

3. Muḥammad Rashīd Ridā', *Tafsīr al-Manār*, Vol. 1, p. 343 ; Vol. VI, p. 448 and Vol. IX, p. 379.

the generations that came after the metamorphosis had taken place. Rāghib observes in explaining this verse: *It is said that He rather made them morally like apes.* Compare also 5 : 60 : “(Worse is he) whom Allah has cursed, and brought his wrath upon him, and of whom he made apes and swine, and he who served the devil : these are worse in plight and more erring from the straight path.” This description of the same people clearly shows that it is men who imitate apes and swine that are meant. See also 4 : 47 : “Or (We shall) curse them as We cursed the violators of the Sabbath”. Now, in the case of the Holy Prophet's opponents from among the Jews, who are referred to in the words: *We shall curse them*, there was no metamorphosis, but here it is stated that the same curse must overtake them as overtook the violators of the Sabbath. A reference to Deut. 28 will show that the curses which Moses prophesied for them meant their being scattered among the nations of the earth, and this was the fate which overtook the Prophet's enemies from among the Jews. *Qiradah* is the plural of *qird*, meaning *an ape*, and among the Arabs the ape is a proverbially incontinent animal, they say *more incontinent than an ape*, (Lane's *Lexicon*).

“Turning to the Bible, we find that the Israelites became *apes*, in all the senses in which that word is used in the Arabic language, by violating the Divine commandments : ‘Thou hast despised Mine holy things, and hast profaned My Sabbaths. In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood : and in thee they eat upon the mountains : in the midst of thee they commit lewdness. In thee have they discovered their fathers' nakedness : in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution. And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife ; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law ; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter..... And I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee in the countries’ ”. (Ezek 22 : 8-15)¹

(5) Transporting of Sheba's Throne

“*He (i.e. Solomon) said : O chiefs, which of you can bring me her (i.e. Queen Sheba's) throne before they come*

1. Muḥammad 'Alī, English Commentary, p. 32. See also footnote 714 on p. 260.

to me in submission.....One having knowledge of the Book said : I will bring it to thee before thy gaze returns to thee.”¹

Usmani considers it a miracle

Solomon wanted the throne instantaneously and the *Maulānā Shabbīr Aḥmad* ‘Usmānī considers it a miracle, that it was literally brought before the twinkling of an eye. He writes in his Urdū commentary:

“For God, by Whose power sun or the earth moves thousands of miles in a moment, it is not difficult for Him to get the throne of Queen Bilqīs (Sheba) transported² in the twinkling of an eye.”³

Sulaiman Nadawi rejects this view

Now let us see what the Late ‘*Allāma* Sulaimān Nadawī, the well-respected and beloved master of Abul Ḥassan ‘Alī Nadawī himself thinks about this miracle :

“The question is, for what object this throne was built ? and why was it brought to the court of Solomon at all ? The common reply is, that it was a royal throne for the Queen to sit which was carefully locked up in Yaman from where, for the manifestation of a miracle, Solomon got it transported to Syria in the twinkling of an eye. *I differ with this opinion.*⁴ My view is that the Queen of Sheba got it prepared for Solomon and as it was a gift — a specimen of the handicraft of her country — she must have brought it with her to Syria. The proof of its being a gift is that the Holy Qur’ān has mentioned about it as a present . . . It is also mentioned in the Holy Qur’ān that a courtier of Solomon who knew about the *kitāb* said : ‘I will bring it

1. The Qur’ān, 27 An-Naml, 38, 40.

2. As it was apparently an act of theft which was not worthy of a prophet and monarch like Solomon, ‘Usmānī comes forward with the justification by saying :

“Before they (i.e. the Queen and her retinue) come to me in submission shows that the property of the hostile infidel is lawful before his acceptance of Islām or his arrest.” (Op. cit. p. 655 under verse 27 : 38).”

3. *Shabbīr Aḥmad* ‘Usmānī, Urdū Commentary, p. 656.

4. Had Muḥammad ‘Alī said a thing like that Nadawī would have quickly accused him of denying the “affirmation of miracles.”

(the throne) before thy gaze returns to thee.' In our language 'before the twinkling of an eye' means quickly. Similarly in the Arabic language 'before thy gaze returns to thee' should be understood in the same manner. Some Companions of the Prophet and great commentators have also explained this expression in this way. *And to say this that it means the doing of the work literally in the twinkling of an eye is in fact betraying one's ignorance about the idioms of the language.*"¹

Nadawī's allegations against Muḥammad 'Alī's scholarship are baseless

Now what 'Usmānī and many other commentators regard an event a miracle is outright rejected by Sulaimān Nadawī. He even goes to the extent of charging those with 'ignorance' who understand this Arabic idiom in some other way. This is the same charge which Nadawī is so fond of levelling against Muḥammad 'Alī over again and again. Let us see how Muḥammad 'Alī interprets the above verses :

"By *one having knowledge of the Book* is meant an Israelite as against the Amalekite referred to in the previous verses. The literal meaning of the concluding words of the sentence is, *before thy gaze returns to thee*. It is the same as *in the twinkling of an eye*, the idea conveyed being that he could do it without delay.

"Strange and curious legends are introduced by some commentators on the supposition that the events narrated took place in immediate succession. The words *so when he saw it settled beside him* do not indicate that he saw it settled in the course of the conversation given in the previous passage. It is an altogether different incident"²

It is clear from the above instances that Muslim commentators (particularly those who are considered authentic Islamic scholars by Nadawī) sometimes basically differ with one another on the interpretation of the Qur'ān and some of them confirm what Muḥammad 'Alī has said on the subject. Differences were found even among the compa-

1. Sulaimān Nadawī, *Tārīkh Ard al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 1, p. 265.

2. Muḥammad 'Alī, English Commentary p. 734.

nions of the Prophet. It should be borne in mind here that the comment on a particular verse reported to have been made by a companion of the Prophet does not mean that no other legitimate meaning can be ascribed to that particular verse. The Qur'ān is an inexhaustible wealth of knowledge. As the time passes by it will keep on revealing its glory to the future generations. Muḥammad 'Alī in its translation and comments has tried to reveal a part of this eternal beauty of the Divine Scripture.¹ Nadawī in his enthusiasm to condemn the soundness of M.'A.'s approach has even condemned the views held by many Islamic authorities of his own choice. I hope these remarks of mine will not prejudice him further about the Lahore Ahmadiyyah Movement but make him and his other readers help understand our position.

1. If one were to compare step by step other parts of Muḥammad 'Alī's commentary with the commentaries in vogue at present, hundreds of other examples could be cited to show that Muḥammad 'Alī has faithfully adhered to the principles of interpretation he has set before him.