

BARELVI'ISM AND CHRISTIANITY: SIMILARITIES AND THE POSSIBLE REASONS WHY

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to discuss and discover the reasons for the resemblances found between the Barelvi sect of Islām and Christianity. It has a striking similarity with Catholicism in a number of its creed and practices particularly the following four, the humanity of Jesus and Muḥammad, the celebration of the birthdays of Jesus and Muḥammad, the building of structures over graves to venerate the dead, and the revering of Saints, supplicating to them and asking them for aid. The question as to why these two sects have similarities was explored. Upon examination of critical texts such as the biographies of Ahmed Riḍa and his own works, it was determined that he was not directly affected or influenced by Christian missionaries, although some evidence points to the fact that he may have absorbed the culture that surrounded him. It was determined that the reasons were a combination of direct and indirect influences of culture and philosophy that led to the similarities between Barelvi'ism and Christianity and Catholicism. This research highlights the significance of social and philosophical influences on individuals and how these lead to different interpretations of Islām, it further adds to the understanding of the emergence of sects in Islām.

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INTRODUCTION

Barelvi'ism is a sect of Islām that recently came into existence during the British rule in India between 1858 and 1947. The name stems from its founder Ahmed Riḍa Barelvi who resided within the city of Bareilly in the Province of Uttar Pradesh, India. Followers of the Barelvi sect mainly originate from the rural areas of India and are inclined to the practices of superstition and saint and grave worship, thus this sect is often described as being an “indianised” (Asthana & Nirmal, 2009, p.67) version of Islām and comprises Ṣufi and Sunni practices. Although there is a strong following of this sect within what is now known as Pakistan, during the British rule of India, the Barelvi movement was opposed by many other sects such as the Ahl ul Ḥadīth and Deobandis who criticised the founder as being an innovator and for deviating from what was believed to be orthodox and traditional beliefs and practices of Islām (Zaheer, 2011). If one was to read the biography of Ahmed Riḍa by Sanyal (1996) and Bihari (2004), one would find that he spent his life calling to what he believed was the correct form of Islām and his works are still available for us today. When one delves into his writings, one will come across a number of beliefs and practices that recur in his works; these specific beliefs and practices are passionately and sometimes fiercely defended by Ahmed Riḍa in his works. While Ahmed Riḍa argues and defends these beliefs as being based upon the religious texts of Islām, one will find that these beliefs and practises greatly resemble those of Christianity, in particular Catholicism and these include the following:

- Position regarding the humanity of Jesus and Muḥammad; a key resemblance, both groups believe that each of the two have certain attributes that surpass human ability, almost being godly, such as being omnipresent and having the ability to answer the prayers of the living.
- The celebration of the birthdays of Jesus and Muḥammad. Both have a day dedicated annually to commemorate them on Christmas and Milād an Nabi.
- The building of structures over graves to venerate the death of a saint.
- The revering of Saints, supplicating to them and asking them for aid.

One deliberates and ponders whether these similarities are coincidental or intentional. Current literature focuses on the works of the Barelvi'is and the biography of Ahmed Riḍa Barelvi; Usha Sanyal in her book *Devotional Islām and Politics in British India* has important studies that delve into the life of Ahmed Riḍa and the effect of his works within Indian society, whereas Ehsan Zaheer in his piece *The Reality of Bareilawi'ism* focuses on the beliefs and practices of Ahmed Riḍa and what he propagated. However, no study has compared the similarities Barelviyyah has with

Christianity all the while asking a fundamental question *why*; was it simply a coincidence that this sect originated during the time of the British Raj where Christian missionaries were prevalent or is there the possibility that the two may have had a greater influence on each other, or are there similar factors influencing them? Thus the objective of this study is to examine in depth the reasons for these similarities and focus will be given to the historical as well as the philosophical and theological influences on Ahmed Riḍa.

The current literature only focuses on either the founder of this sect or the beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa and his followers. The gap lies in research of the emergence of this particular sect and the similarities it has with Christianity and, in particular, Catholicism. This study will highlight the significance of social, political and philosophical influences on individuals and how these lead to different interpretations of Islām. This research will emphasise the different reasons that could have led to the appearance of this sect and thus add further insight into the subject of emergence of sects in Islām. If one is able to understand the basis and the possible causes for these resemblances, it will assist in understanding the very important topic of what lead to the emergence of the different sects in Islām. Likewise this research looks to explore the reality of some of the claims that have been linked to Ahmed Riḍa, namely that he was affected by the British government and he was working for the British government.

As aforementioned not many have spent enough time delving into the life of Ahmed Riḍa, the only work in English that gives an insight to the life of Ahmed Riḍa in some detail is that of Usha Sanyal, her book *Devotional Islām and Politics in British India* will be used in this research to help understand the situation surrounding Ahmed Riḍa and may give some understanding to what affected Ahmed Riḍa's understanding of Islām. The only other piece of work that specified Ahmed Riḍa's beliefs and practices is that of Ehsan Ilahi Zaheer in his book *The Reality of Bareilawi'ism*, however his work is polemical in nature. He argues that the beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa goes against the very fundamentals of Islām, the reader is given an insight into the infamous conflict between the two sects of Ahl-Hadeeth and Bareilwiism at the time Ahmed Riḍa was active in his Islāmic call. This current piece will look into the beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa and attempt to understand what could have led to the similarities between the two religions, and consequently aid research that delves into the reasons for the emergence of sects in Islām as mentioned above.

Methodology:

To get an accurate understanding of his beliefs, one will have to refer back to the main works of Ahmed Riḍa. Indeed Ahmed Riḍa has many books, some would claim that Ahmed Riḍa wrote over a thousand books (Sharma, 2005). It is near impossible to read and extract the beliefs from each and every written work, it seems more reasonable to refer to his main works. The following books will be used: *Fatāwa Rizawīyyah*, *Malfuzat*, *Al Amn wal Ula*, *Hadaīq Bakhshish*, *Khalis al 'itiqad*, *ad*

Dawlatu al Makkiyyatu. The beliefs and practices that are stressed and advocated will be noted and then will be compared to similar beliefs of Christianity. However, the main part of this research will look at possible reasons that could have led Ahmed Riḍa to bring a form of Islām that resembled Christianity. There are three main hypotheses that will be explored. The first hypothesis; Ahmed Riḍa was directly affected by Christianity, either by Christian Missionaries that were in North India or by the British government, this is the claim of the Deobandis (Mahmood 2012). The second hypothesis that will be looked at is that Ahmed Riḍa absorbed in the different cultures around him and thus was indirectly influenced and it was this that led his form of Islām to resemble Christianity. If one finds that one of the previous two hypotheses are true this would necessitate that Ahmed Riḍa propagated a Christian version of Islām. If it is not possible to prove these hypotheses then a third hypothesis that will be explored and that is that both Ahmed Riḍa and Christianity were affected by similar external factors that led to the religions being similar. If we find that this hypothesis is true this would necessitate that Ahmed Riḍa propagated what he believed was the correct form of Islām and that these beliefs were parallel to certain beliefs held by some of the different sects of Christianity.

The first chapter sets the scene, examining the historical context of Uttar Pradesh in the North West Frontier; it delves into the religious situation in terms of freedom and activities of the religious groups present during that period, it also examines the aims and objectives of the Christian Missionaries and the munazara¹ that occurred in the late 19th century between the Christian Missionaries and the Muslims to highlight the possible influences on Ahmed Riḍa that were present within society. The second chapter examines the life and beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa and includes his early years, his education and his works in addition to mentioning his teachers and their history; this chapter will also compare his beliefs to those who opposed him such as the Ahl ul Ḥadīth and the Deobandis.

The third chapter will include a detailed description of the resemblances between the beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa and Christianity, this will be done by returning to the works of Ahmed Riḍa and works of Christians that allude to and explain their beliefs. The fourth, fifth and sixth chapter will analyse and test each hypothesis in depth. The strengths and weaknesses of each hypothesis will be looked at separately. The concluding chapter begins to ascertain the actual reason as to why so many resemblances are present between the two.

This entire research was library based and the sources that were used to conduct this study were from primary, secondary and tertiary sources. The works of Ahmed Riḍa himself were used to get a first-hand understanding of his creed; these were either written in Urdu or Arabic or translated into English. Furthermore, important biographies both in the Urdu and English language were used to identify his

¹ Munazara: this word has its roots in the Arabic language munāzara and it has been adopted by the Urdu language as munazara. It means to debate or discuss.

influences such as Usha Sanyal's book titled *Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi: In the Path of the Prophet* and *Devotional Islām and Politics in British India: Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi and His Movement, biographies from his followers* and Ehsan Zaheer's book *The Realities of Bareilwi'ism* were also used. Dr Khalid Mahmood in his book *Mutali'a Barelwiyāt* explores the controversies and conspiracies that surrounded Ahmed Riḍa, these books were used to understand the intentions of Ahmed Riḍa. Historical information was attained via books of history and encyclopaedias and information on the activities and aims of the Christian missionaries were also attained from books of history in addition to first-hand accounts of Christian missionaries; from the books that were used was Avril Powell's *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*. Powell's (1993) exploration of the Missionary effort in India in the 19th century provides an invaluable account of the effect that the Missionaries had. This book is important as it deals with the confrontation between the Christian Missionaries and Muslims in Northern India by going in to depth about the debates that occurred between them. As for the creed of the Catholics, it was mainly attained from Reverend John Procter from his book *The Catholic Creed or What do Catholics believe* and the *Catholic Encyclopaedia*.

CHAPTER 1 HISTORY OF NORTH INDIA, UTTAR PRADESH

It is no doubt that one is a product of their education, society and religion (Mills, 2000); these institutions carve ideas and beliefs into individuals and create different personalities within the society who may in turn affect the people surrounding them. For this reason, it is of upmost importance to understand the entire situation that had surrounded Ahmed Riḍa during his lifetime. Moreover, as Ahmed Riḍa was primarily educated by his father (Malik, 2008), Naqi Ali Khan, it is equally as important to examine the situation prior to his coming to determine the influences that had affected his father and consequently Ahmed Riḍa. There is a requirement for us to focus on three significant periods of time within the district of Uttar Pradesh; these periods are key in establishing and understanding the different influences on Ahmed Riḍa and thus determining the possible reasons as to why his creed and practices matches those of Christianity. The first: pre-mutiny Uttar Pradesh, the era in which his father predominately lived in, attention will be given to the education, social and religious situation within Uttar Pradesh which will provide a good representation of what society and state of affairs encompassed Naqi Ali Khan. Secondly, the events of 1857, the mutiny, will be highlighted as the district of Uttar Pradesh was one of the primary locations of the Mutiny; in addition, the reasons for this uprising will be vital in defining the mood and views of the general people. Finally, post-mutiny Uttar Pradesh, this period coincides with the most crucial aspect of Ahmed Riḍa's education and development of ideas and beliefs; this was the era in which he was most influential.

1.1 Pre-mutiny Uttar Pradesh.

1.1.1 General situation of the Muslims

The strength of the Muslims in early 19th century India was declining, a once strong empire was now non-existent. Muslims were now under the control of the British who favoured the Hindus over them. The British would give the Hindus precedence over the Muslims, and the Hindus would subsequently deprive some Muslims from certain customary rights. The British increased land revenue in certain places to nearly double the amount to what the Muslims used to pay under the Mughals (Chandra, 1971). Thus the Muslims were to some extent degraded as a result of the British consolidation of power within India; this played a vital role in transforming the opinions and views of the people.

Many historians stress the importance of the mutiny in 1857 and explore the reasons as to why it erupted, but many fail to mention that during the reign of the British, there were up to 40 major rebellions before 1857 (Chandra, 1971); these rebellions differed in their length and where they took place. General Bakht Khan, who led the rebellion in Bareilly, was a key figure in the 1857 mutiny in Uttar Pradesh and Raza Ali Khan, the paternal grandfather of Ahmed Rida, was from those who fought bravely against the British alongside General Bakht. It seems evident from this that the view and mood amongst the general population in India was that of aversion and they rejected the changes brought by the British which in turn manifested itself in the many mutinies that occurred; however, it is upon one to determine the other aspects within the society in detail such as the religious freedom of the people in India to gain a clearer understanding of their situation under the British.

1.1.2 Religious situation and freedom

Two main religions existed in India during this period of time, Hinduism and Islām. In the North West Frontier, the population was about 47 million, over 40 million were Hindu and only 6.5 million were Muslims comprising of only 13% of the population, this leaves the remainder spread between a number of religions like Christianity, Jainas and Sikhs (Crooke, 1998). It is difficult to believe that none of these religions were affected by each other; Crooke (1998) depicts a sense of religious freedom that was present in the North West frontier, he mentions that an onlooker would observe

The mulla counting his beads, as he drones out a passage from the koran; the white robed worshippers kneeling reverently in the courtyard of the mosque, as they face in the direction of Mecca: the pious Hindu saluting the sun as he starts for his day's labour; the Christian missionary preaching the gospel to a listless crowd of spectators. (Crooke, 1998, p. 264)

From this description one can clearly understand that there was a certain amount of freedom with regards to practising religion in the North West frontier. So the Muslim was allowed to worship his Lord and attend the mosque, fast the month of Ramadan and celebrate the Shi'i festival of Muḥarram. Similarly, the Hindu was allowed to venerate the cow and worship their idols; and the Christian was allowed to attend church and preach his religion amongst the masses. While each religion had separate doctrines that they adhered to, you find after time many people would merge the different religious practises together; consequently, a Muslim may hold on to and perform certain rituals but simultaneously practise Hindu or Christian rituals (Crooke, 1998). He goes on to mention 'you may find a person has a Muslim name, attends the mosque, is circumcised but at the same time venerates certain Hindu gods, performs the nikah through a priest' (Crooke, 1998, p. 239). Thus, we can ascertain that certain Hindu practices would become an Islāmic trend and thus would lead to the religions

resembling each other. For this reason, there was a widespread custom of shrine worship and the following of pirs² amongst the Muslims of India as was practiced by Ahmed Riḍa and his family; it should be noted that the Grandfather, Raza Ali Khan, was known to have started the tradition of ṭaṣawwuf within his family and he himself was a senior murīd (Cassim, 2010). The population would blindly follow the pir in many aspects of the Islāmic religion whether it was the orthodox teaching or not, (Modood & Meer, 2010) the importance was given to rules and commandments of the pirs. This allegiance would be significant in the deterioration of the British rule in India, as the ‘pirs were pushed to a large extent’ (Ansari, 1992, p. 8) from the followers below them against the British, the British would consequently have to use these pirs in order to suppress uprisings within India (Ansari, 1992).

It should be noted that when the British took control over India they ‘assumed a policy of benevolent neutrality’ (Banerjee, 1990, p. 99). They gave the people the right to choose their own religion without being compelled to accept the Christian religion and no preference was given in terms of rights to any religion, therefore the British did not interfere with any of the other religious practices. However, Smith (1963) explained how this was to change, in 1850 the Freedom of Religion Act, initially the Caste Disabilities Removal Act, was passed which imposed

Any forfeiture of rights or property, or may be held in any way to impair or affect any right of inheritance, by reason of his or her renouncing or having being excluded from any communion of any religion, or being deprived of caste, shall cease to be enforced by law. (Smith, 1963, p. 70)

Seemingly, this act provided every citizen with their basic human rights of inheritance, family or funeral rites; however, it was contradictory to the religious rulings of both the Hindus and the Muslims. For the Hindus, funeral rites were to be performed by no other than the Hindu and the right of succession was only for a Hindu; similarly, for the Muslims an apostate who is thus a disbeliever cannot inherit as clearly stated in the hadith that a ‘Muslim does not inherit from a disbeliever neither does the disbeliever inherit from the Muslim.’³ Thus, it primarily gave the Christian convert the rights he lacked as a result of his or her change in religion and deprived the Muslims the right to practice their religion freely.

From 1850 until the mutiny the British were much involved in the affairs of the other religions; this is evident in the transforming of the educational system. Initially when the British arrived on the shores of India, Lapidus (2014, p. 699) mentions that the British at first sympathized with traditional Muslim education, but by the mid-19th century this mood had changed drastically and they started to view these religious

² Pir is a Muslim Ṣufi saint who the common man would approach for divine help.

³ Saḥīḥ al-Bukhari 6764 and Saḥīḥ Muslim 1614

practises that were being taught as ‘barbaric’ (Lapidus, 2014, p. 699). Hence, it is not difficult to understand that the British would want to put down their own laws on a country that many historians describe as being in a state of “anarchy” (Spear, 1965, p. 131). The British wanted to change certain features of education as a method to remove these barbaric practices from within society. The education system under the British rule will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

1.1.3 Education system

Once the British had set foot in India believed that they had to introduce into this country their way of life and education was a tool that they would use to transfer ideologies from the west to the east. The British amongst themselves would differ in their ideologies, Spear (1965, p.135) mentions that ‘three broad tendencies of thought’ were found within the British: firstly ‘the Tory or conservative view’, they recommended extreme caution; they were impressed by the value and strength of Indian institutions, he went onto say however, ‘they were acutely conscious of the danger of provoking a violent reaction by unwise interference or hasty innovations’ (Spear, 1965, p.135). Hence, this first group wanted to utilise the strengths already present within India to resurrect and revive a country that had once had a thriving society. As for the second school of thought, these Britons envisioned to integrate the ideas of the East and the West. Spear (1965, p. 135) mentions ‘they accepted the desirability of improvements and of the introduction of western ideas and values, but they were also convinced of the value of the traditional institutions and the strength of traditional feeling’. As for the third view then it was a vision of major transformation; they deemed that the situation needed a complete change and considered that the only way forward was to change the religion of the country to Christianity. The ideas set out by the British would undoubtedly have either a positive or a negative effect on the population of India.

The British set up three main universities in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, all basing their education on the University of London. The British also set up schools in many different places ranging from schools in small villages up to colleges in many different districts. All of this was under the watchful eye of the British, Hunter (2013, p. 474) mentions that these schools would ‘receive pecuniary support, granted under the guarantee of regular inspection’. The British made the official language English in 1835 while banning other certain languages like Arabic and Persian. Hence, in the mid-19th century, the medium of instruction was English. This was first proposed by Charles Grant, a Scottish Evangelist who served in the East Indian Company (Bhattacharya, 2017) and in 1835 became a reality when Thomas Macaulay released the ‘Education Minute’ in which two main questions were discussed: which type of education is preferred - western education or cultural? And what would the medium be, English or the language of the people? The Minute favoured Western education and English. McLeod (2000, p. 141) states that Macaulay wanted ‘Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect’. The Minute was approved immediately by Governor General William Bentinck, and so 1835

became a year of victory for the British in establishing influence over the Indians through the use of education. As aforementioned the schools were closely monitored by the government and aid was only given to those who had western style education.

In contrast, there were those who disliked or disregarded what they thought was a British attempt to Christianise India. The Deobandi School was set up in mid-19th century to counteract the oncoming surge of the British influence, which they believed was a danger to Muslims.⁴ The accumulation of interference in religious matters through the use of laws and education was from the major reasons for the uprising and mutiny of 1857.

1.2 The Mutiny

Many historians have written about what they believed were the reasons for the mutiny of 1857. Until now the historians differ as to what were the causes, was the situation before this uprising entirely misunderstood by the British? Was it frustration from the Muslims and Hindus because they were being undermined? Did the British, on the arrival to the shores of India, show enough respect to the other religions?

Llewellyn-Jones (2007) mentioned that one can argue it was the maulvis or the Muslim preachers that gave fatāwa to fight and up rise against the British and thus instigated the uprising. Other historians would mention that it was the continuation of the legacy of Shah Waliullaah not wanting to be under the regime of the British and not seeing any answer except defeat or be defeated. Bates and Carter (2009) narrate from Taylor, who quotes in his book *Companion to the Indian mutiny* about a squadron of the British being attacked just outside Bareilly by Muslim Ghazis

All at once a most furious charge was made by a body of about 360 Rohilla Ghazis, who rushed out, shouting 'Bismillah! Allah! Allah! Deen! Deen!' Sir Colin [Campbell] was close by, and called out "Ghazis, Ghazis! Close up the ranks! Bayonet them as they come on," But that was not so easily done; the Ghazis charged in blind fury, with their round shields on their left arms, their bodies bent low, waving their tulwars [swords] over their heads, throwing themselves under the bayonets, and cutting at the men's legs. The struggle was short, but every one of the Ghazis was killed. None attempted to escape; they had evidently come to kill or be killed. (Bates & Carter, 2009, p. 58-59)

⁴ See section 1.3.1

This account makes the rage and intent of the Muslims obvious; the British definitely angered the Muslims to the extent that they risked their lives with the intent to annihilate. The Muslims shouting “Deen! Deen!” implies that this was for the religion and religion was the reason for their uprising. But one needs to explore exactly what made the Indians up rise for their religion, perhaps they felt a sense of religious insecurity that encouraged this mutiny to occur.

The British had introduced the well-known new greased cartridges; it was said that the British had introduced new cartridges which were a ‘smeared with the fat of cows and pigs’ The cartridges ‘had to be bitten off before insertion into the rifle’ (Spear, 1965, p. 223), any Muslim or Hindu would find this offensive and would see this as a ploy to undermine their respective religions. The body armour that was worn by the Indian soldiers was made out of cow skin; this would no doubt anger any Hindu. Furthermore, in 1853 Brigadier Mackenzie ordered that since the ritual of Muharram coincided with Sabbath there should be no music or noise (Mackenzie, 1884), therefore putting the British above the Muslims. Some Muslims in India at that time believed the rituals of Muharram to be part of the religion so when they were prevented from practising their religion it no doubt caused hatred towards the British.

Furthermore, the Christian missionaries were making efforts to force their religion upon the Hindus and Muslims. Sharma (2005 p. 35) mentions that the Christian missionaries ‘ridiculed’ the Hindus and Muslims religious practises openly in public places. Moreover, the Missionaries received support from the government and the government believed that with an increase of the Christian population it would strengthen stability in the country. This view is further strengthened by what Sayyid Ahmed Khan said concerning the reasons for the uprising

The open as well as the clandestine high handed activities of the missionaries were one of the major causes of this uprising...Everyone was sure that government would not use open compulsion for conversion but secretly, the way it destroyed Arabic and Sanskrit, by ensuring economic and intellectual bankruptcy in the country, it would convert them to Christianity by distributing religious books, by propagating its religion and by offering inducements of service. (Sharma, 2005, p.36)

It is clear that the Christian missionaries played a pivotal role in developing a sense of anger and hatred towards the British government in India.

As the British were in control, the Muslims and the Hindus were subsequently sidelined; the above mentioned information substantiates the conclusion that as Smith

describes was a 'cry of 'religion in danger' (Smith, 1963, p. 71). Thus a possible cause for the Mutiny was due to the interference of the British in the religious affairs of the Muslims and Hindus. The main mutiny did not last for long as it was crushed by the British; however, the loss suffered by the British both physically and mentally would have an everlasting effect on British rule in India. Therefore, the literature alludes to the fact that from the beginning of the 19th century until the mutiny was an era of change in India, especially in the field of education. These changes will shape the thoughts of Naqi Ali Khan, the father of Ahmed Riḍa, this will be addressed in 1.3.1 and in chapter 2.

1.3 Post Mutiny Uttar Pradesh

To understand the situation post mutiny, we will need to analyse the different narratives of the 1857 event, this includes: The British government and the Muslims

As for the British government, the next phase in the British Rule is referred to by Spear (1965) as the reorganizing phase. This took place between 1858 and the turn of the century. The British had to adjust certain aspects of their rule, damage had been caused by the British due to a lack of understanding before the mutiny and the British certainly did not want a recurrence of the mutiny. As the mutiny was due to the changes the British brought into India at the beginning of the decade, the British had to revert back to their policy of being more open to other religions. J W Kaye, a secretary at the Indian office, said 'the prime object of all our efforts...is the tranquilization of the public mind...until we have restored the national confidence in the non-aggressive spirit of the British Government' (Metcalf, 1965, p. 92). Sir Charles Wood voiced similar objectives where he said 'we must be very careful not to give the natives of India any reason to believe that we are about to attack their religious feelings and prejudices' (Metcalf, 1965 p. 93). Thus we can understand from this that the British government in post mutiny period were more relaxed with regards to other religious practises. This policy was to be held by the government until the turn of the century. However, in contrast to this Charles Raikes, a judge of the Sudder court in Agra, mentions in his notes on the 1857 revolt that the 'laws [of the British Government] should interfere' (Raikes, 1858, p. 141) if certain religious practices observed by Muslims and the Hindus were something that the British Government did not agree with. For example, the practice of self-harming and beating oneself during the month of Muḥarram was one that Raikes mentions as being a custom that needs and should be changed; in addition to this remark, he mentions that if a Christian Minister was to do something morally incorrect then he would too be punished - thus the motive to introduce the changes was to eradicate what was deemed by the British as morally incorrect, whether it was from a Hindu, Muslim or Christian.

1.3.1 The education system and the Christian Missionaries involvement

The mutiny in 1857 was a defining moment for the missionaries. The missionaries suffered financially as well as both psychologically and physically in terms of numbers especially in the North Western Provinces. However, the various missionary

societies were able to recover what they had lost through fining those who were involved in the mutiny. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) played a big part in raising funds for the missionaries in India (Metcalf, 1965.) They saw it as a wakeup call to their negligence of calling to their creed; Metcalf (1965) quotes Herbert B. Edwardes, a General in the army

In these things we hear the voice of God. It says, I gave India to England for the benefit of its 180 million peoples so that you may communicate the light of the Bible and the knowledge of the true God to these Heathen creatures. You have neglected this charge. (Metcalf, 1965, p. 102)

Therefore, they believed that the mutiny was a punishment of God upon them for not propagating the Christian religion to the Indian population sufficiently. Hence, changes had to be made; the Missionaries started to promote the idea of having the bible studies in secondary education and believed that introducing Christianity through education would be a significant way to change society. Metcalf (1965 p. 100) mentions ‘attention was directed primarily to securing Bible teaching in the government schools’, he quotes Edwardes, the commissioner of Peshawar that ‘it is our plain duty to make the Bible the basis of native education’ (Metcalf, 1965, p. 102). Furthermore, the missionaries had a certain principle which was ‘India needs the Gospel, needs Christianity, in order to be re-righted and regenerated’ (Metcalf, 1965, p. 99). Alongside the education, the missionaries began to be more active in prisons after the mutiny. They believed that those imprisoned should not be omitted from receiving the call of God. All the while the missionaries and certain people of government urged as Edwardes said ‘the elimination of all unchristian principles from the government of British India’ (Metcalf, 1965, p. 102). It should be noted that not all in the government were in agreement with the strategy of the missionaries. They believed that propagation of Christianity was the very thing that led to the mutiny in the first place. W.D. Arnold, an educational administrator in India, argued that the missionaries had misunderstood the reason why they had come to India; he said the British were ‘only trustees for the Hindu and Mohammedan community’ (Metcalf, 1965, p. 105).⁵

As for the Muslims and their views on the changes in education, then it was seen as if the British were watering down one’s religion. Certain Indian parents did not send their children to school believing that it would corrupt their mind with the Christian religion. In 1882, the Hunter Commission on Education hearing was held in the North-Western Provinces; many Indian parents testified that they as parents were ‘reluctant to send their children to schools whose avowed purpose was to convert people to Christianity’ (Webster, 1976, p. 163). Naqi Ali Khan was from those who

⁵ See section 1.4

refused to send his son to school as it may have been due to the “turbulence of the post-1857 period, including the British occupation of Muslim mosques” (Malik, 2007, p. 23); one can only assume that Naqi Ali Khan home schooled his son, this point is strengthened by the fact that the biographies state that Naqi Ali Khan was one of Ahmed Riḍa’s main teachers.

If one reads some of the books of Ahmed Riḍa, they will find that he spoke very harshly against Sayyid Ahmed Khan.⁶ Sayyid Ahmed Khan was from the forefront of those who wanted to change the education system in India in the post mutiny period; he was against the forcing of Christian studies in schools but at the same time an advocate for western studies. The English culture and civilisation highly impressed him; he said ‘what I have seen and see daily is utterly beyond the imagination of a native India’ (Muhammad, 2002, p.20). His aim was to increase the relationship between the Muslims and the British. He also wanted the people of India to learn from what Khan perceived as British counterparts. It is important to mention that he was against certain practises like polygamy and the purdah; he believed it to be uncivilised and backward (Mohapatra & Mohanty, 2002). He set up a number of schools in this period in the North Western provinces and tried to incorporate western education in these schools namely in the cities of Muradabad in 1859, Ghazipur and Aligarh in 1864; the Aligarh school was a science college built on the model of the British colleges. Furthermore, he set up the Muhammadan Anglo Oriental High School; this was elevated to the level of a college in 1877 and in 1921 it was elevated to the level of a university. In contrast to this, as aforementioned the Deobandi school was set up to counteract the British education, this school was based on a Islāmī curriculum which included subjects such as fiqh and ḥadīth. The Deobandi response to the British change of education was one that continued until the turn of the century.

Therefore, one can see that the British, in post mutiny India, had a vision of change, the view was to insert more Christianity into education, therefore, a very crucial question is to be asked, was Naqi Ali Khan, the father of Ahmed Riḍa, affected by this change and consequently Ahmed Riḍa was exposed to a Christian education? There is insufficient literature about how much governmental schooling Ahmed Riḍa was exposed to, Malik (2008) alludes to the fact that Naqi Ali Khan was averse to the school education in post mutiny India and thus may have home schooled his children. The other biographies of Ahmed Riḍa also allude to the fact that Naqi Ali Khan was Ahmed Riḍa’s main teacher. This leads one to believe that the changes brought about by the British government in education may not have had a significant effect on Naqi Ali Khan or his children. Therefore, one turns his attention to the role of the Christian missionaries in India and the affect they had on spreading Christianity and importantly any possible meetings or debates between them and Ahmed Riḍa.

⁶ See chapter 2

1.4 Christian Missionaries in India

Before delving into the effect of the missionaries in North India, one needs to have a better understanding of Christianity in India. Looking at the literature surrounding Christianity in the north- west of India in the 19th century, one will find that in the early part of the century the ‘presence of Christianity was scattered’ and ‘ineffective’ (Neill, 2002, p.331). This was to change as the century progressed as Webster (2007, p.111) mentions that after the mutiny until 1880 there was a ‘significant growth for the Christian community in North-West India’. It is vital to understand the effect that Christianity had in this period as it coincides with the era of Ahmed Riḍa’s youth and education. Webster (2007, p.112) also mentions that the Christian community [in the North- West] increased ‘from about two hundred to almost four thousand during this period’. This increase which occurred in the north- west region of India during the twenty two year period demonstrates that the Christians were much more effective after the mutiny in certain areas of India. There were a number of different Christian sects that had placed themselves in the North of India during the 19th century.

Roman Catholics

From the different sects that were present in India were the Roman Catholics who had been in India for a long period, their work had not shown any great signs of achievement, in fact to some the situation was ‘highly unsatisfactory’ (Neill, 2002, p.279). The beginning of the 19th century was not too much different, with persistent problems preventing their efforts in calling to Catholicism (Neill, 2002). The situation slowly improved during the early half of the 19th century, Neill (2002, p.305) mentions that between 1830 and the mutiny for the Roman Catholics ‘much had certainly be gained or regained’. This progression was to show more signs of improvement after the mutiny, this period coincides with the time of Ahmed Riḍa’s education. However one should note that this progression is considered significant relative to its situation prior to this. This point is reinforced by Webster (2007, p.111) who mentions while discussing the 1881 census ‘there were 299 Catholics recorded’. This number is out of ‘3912 Native Christians in the Punjab and its dependencies’ (Webster, 2007, p.111). This indicates that while there was some improvement, the work by the Roman Catholics in this period would have not caused too much concern to the likes of Ahmed Riḍa even though the beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa closely resemble those of Catholicism; one would not see the Roman Catholics having enough strength to influence Ahmed Riḍa. However it was the next phase that is of some importance to the issue at hand. During the period between 1881- 1918 Catholicism increased even further at a much faster rate; Webster (2007) mentions that by 1911 the census listed 8,497 Roman Catholics, a substantial increase from the mere 299 in 1881. To further strengthen this point, Webster (2007, p.200) quotes a Presbyterian missionary who mentions the loss of converts to Catholicism, he states that ‘village after village has gone over to them’. One can infer from the above that Catholicism was on the increase in North West India towards the end of the 19th century

Baptist

Another Sect of Christianity that was present in North West India was that of the Baptists. The literature surrounding the Baptists in the North West of India reveals that before the mutiny Baptism was something of a rarity (Webster, 2007). However, in 1859 Reverend James Smith started to preach in Delhi and had a little more success. Webster mentions that within two years ‘the Baptists there [in Delhi] had increased from virtually nothing to at least ninety- four.’ This number slowly increased as years went by and a church and a school were made available to the demand of the Baptists (Webster, 2007). Towards the end of the 1870’s the ‘Baptists sent a delegation to investigate Smith’s work’ the delegation was ‘impressed with the independence, vitality and growth they witnessed’. Baptism was also having some success in Punjab, Webster (2007) mentions that between the late 1850’s and 1880 there was ‘132 baptisms mentioned in the printed records of the Lodiana Mission’ (Webster, 2007, p.114 - p. 118). An important point to note was that the highest number of people to be baptised were of Muslim origin (Webster, 2007). Towards the end of the century Baptism continued to grow however mainly within the Chuhra community, one can comprehend from the literature that the Baptists did achieve some success however at no alarming rate to the Muslim community.

Anglicans

Webster (2007, p. 115) mentions that the Anglican movement was similar to the Baptist movement except that the ‘Anglicans had more woman converts and thus more Christian families’. It should be mentioned that the Anglicans also had a number of converts, Abdul Masih and Molvi ’Imad ud –din being the most noteworthy (Webster, 2007). In 1879 the Reverend Gulzar Shah was able to baptize twenty eight people in the Punjab; however there was not much accomplishment in the North West of India.

Presbyterian

Another of the sect of Christianity that sought to bring their religion to India was the Presbyterians, with a good amount of success. In the early 19th century the Presbyterians concentrated on Western India, Bombay in particular. Neill (2002, p.332) mentions that the Western India ‘was by far the strongest centre of Christian influence’. He also mentions that the ‘strongest’ of the groups that were at work in west India were the Scottish Presbyterians, the Irish Presbyterians decided to start their campaign north of Bombay. Additionally to this, the Presbyterians, towards the middle of the 19th century, decided to move into more central India and placed themselves in the ‘rather lonely’ city of Nagpur (Neill, 2002, p.332). Their work of carried on into the latter part of the 19th century and they decided to add a number of colleges to the schools in the North West of India. Webster (2007, p.148) mentions ‘in addition to this impressive institutional presence, individual Christians continued to occupy prominent positions within the educational system as a whole’. Combined

with their success in the West of India, the Presbyterians had a certain amount success also in the North West in the latter part of the 19th century. Webster mentions that according to the 1911 Census there was just below 93,000 Presbyterians which was over the total number of Christians in the area (Webster, 2007). This was an increase from a mere 1284 two decades earlier.

The literature surrounding the efforts of the Christians in the North West of India clearly shows that the latter part of the 19th century was much more successful than the previous part of the century and it is evident from the works of Webster (2007) and Neill (2002) that missionaries had an impact on the Indian society, however, a fundamental question needs to be asked: who was affected by their missionary work? Ahmed Riḍa's understanding of Islām resembled certain ideologies held by some Christian sects, so was he affected by the missionaries? It is necessary for us to delve more into their world, to try to understand firstly their aims, objectives and their methodology and secondly, the success of their call. A detailed section will follow focusing closely on the reaction of the Indian population of India to the call of the Christians.

1.4.1 Their Aims and Objectives

Even though Historians have differed regarding the arrival of the Missionaries in India, some have documented that the missionaries arrived onto the shores of India in the late 16th century (Sharma, 2005), while others have penned down the beginning of the 16th century as the arrival of the Missionaries (Neill, 2004). However, the period of concentration will be on the mid-19th century as this period coincides with the era of Ahmed Riḍa. Interestingly, Historians have also mentioned the 19th century as the turning point in the Christian Missionary work in India (Quinn, 2014). The Christian missionaries within themselves were of different sects, however, a few of them held similar major beliefs. The Protestants and the Catholics were at the forefront in trying to spread their beliefs, therefore, it is only correct to differentiate between these two different types of missionary work in North India. In addition, it is essential to define what is meant and understood by the term mission and missionary work. A definition of these terms will be given according to the Catholics and the Protestants, as they had very similar beliefs and their beliefs and practices resembled those of Barelvi'ism.

The Catholic mission

The mission under the catholic banner is referred to as outgoing or outward missions. The understanding is that a catholic calls any person who is a non-Catholic, without looking at his or her gender or race (McGrath, 2008). They generally believed it was their duty to pass on the word of God and expand the kingdom of God. The main goals of the catholic are split into three stages

- The first the proclamation of the gospel or the proclamation of the faith amongst pagans.
- The second being the inner or the internal conversion which focuses on the heart.

- The third was the organisation of the church (Sharma, 1988)

The Catholics would pay great attention to the church and its role in the life of a person. This is one of the clear differences between Catholics and Protestants. The erection of churches in North India was something that the Catholic missionaries would perceive to be one of their main goals as they believed that the Christian community always needed a connection to the church (Colaço, 1998; Sharma, 2005).

The Protestant mission

As for the aims and objectives of the Protestant missionaries, then it was to instil the love of Christ into the hearts of the Indian people. From their goals are as follows (Sharma, 2005):

- They wanted the Indian population to believe in the gospel as the word of God.
- Bring men and God together in a loving relationship
- To create a connection between the people and the church.
- They wanted to save the people just as rev. Bernard Lucas said “not just to save the soul of the Hindu but to save the soul of India” (Doss, 2010, p. 5).

Thus, the above definitions of ‘missions’ explains the motives of the missionaries, however, as for what the Muslims perceived regarding the Missionaries, it was as a vicious plan to eliminate the native religions using whatever methodology they could; Maulana Fazl Haq Khairabadi, quoted by Sharma (2005, p. 192), believed that “the British had prepared a scheme for the conversion of India to Christianity” he went on to say “they, therefore, used every means fair or foul and made every possible effort to destroy the native religions and society” (Sharma, 2005, p. 192).

1.4.2 Their Methodology

It should be known that mid-19th century was a very important time for the missionaries as they were given more support from the government. Before this the East Indian Company (EIC) did not allow them to evangelise the people of Indian. Those who were able to evangelise found it extremely difficult to penetrate the Muslims and Hindus as the two had a strong connection to their respected beliefs. The missionaries at first tried the direct approach, they would stand in market places where the people would be and call them to Christianity verbally. They would also try discussing with the Indian population one to one. Nonetheless, this was met with angry responses as individuals from the Indian population did not want to leave what they were upon. The missionaries had to rethink their strategies. In 1854, Wood encouraged the missionaries to enter the field of education believing that education will play a significant role in changing the Indian society; this was also because the method of directly calling to Christianity was failing, thus the Christian Missionaries started to put more effort into communicating the beliefs of Christianity through education. Thus, it was the objective of the missionaries to command the whole educational domain (Farooq, 2014). This was echoed somewhat by Bellenoit (2007, p.

371) who mentioned 'at one point nearly 70% of high schools and secondary schools in UP were mission run'. This shows clear determination from the Missionaries to run the education system and use it to propagate their religion. However, they could not teach only Christianity in the schools, so they taught alongside it other core subjects.

Furthermore, the Christians within themselves during the mid-19th century tried to unite the efforts of the missionaries. In 1844, the young men's Christian association was set up in London; this association was set up for those who regarded Jesus as their God and saviour and wanted to expand the kingdom of God. The YMCA set up a branch of this association in India showing the importance of the activities and missions of the Missionaries in India. In 1847, the Universal Evangelical Alliance (UEA) was set up to try to bring together the missionaries in order to strengthen their position in India. Alongside those whose primary job was to call directly to Christianity, there were those who had the duty of providing medical care to the Indian Population. They would use the care that they provided as a way of propagating Christianity to the needy population of India. The medical missionary association was set up in India to provide the Indian Population with what they needed from medical or spiritual healing.

1.4.3 Missionary Effort and Impact

In the late 1830s a man known as Carl Pfander, who was a Protestant missionary, arrived in the North West Frontier. He was stationed in Caucasus before he was transferred to the North of India. Pfander believed that the Muslim era had come to an end and it was time for the Christians to rule (Powell, 1993). Christianity had been spreading quite quickly in the west and Pfander believed that the tide was changing in the east. Pfander took up his post and tried to invite many Muslim scholars at that time for a debate or munazara. The majority of the 'ulama' at that time more or less refused to get drawn into a discussion with Pfander, the only response that he received was a few letters from a few of the 'ulama'. His presence in the North Western Province of India, however, was starting to cause a stir with some of the 'ulama' and locals until late 1854 when Rahmat Allah ibn Khalil al-Kairanawi and Dr Wazir Khan took up the opportunity to debate Pfander and his associates. The great debate took place in Agra. From the account mentioned by Powell (1993), Pfander and his associates was no match for al-Kairanawi and Dr Wazir Khan, who challenged the very core of the Christian belief, the Bible. Al-Kairanawi and Dr Wazir Khan made use of European academic works on the text of the Bible to point out discrepancies which in turn proved their point, which was that the Bible had been distorted. Pfander accepted that there were discrepancies in the Bible, and this therefore weakened Pfander's call to the trinity and other beliefs. This debate was no doubt a success for the Muslims in trying to counteract the missionaries call. Al-Kairanawi saw the work of the missionaries as very dangerous to the Muslims and took it upon himself to repel the doubts of Pfander and the other missionaries; as a result, he wrote many books answering many doubts spread by the Christians. The missionary effort in the North West and the rest of India thus gave birth to an intellectual uprising by the Ahl ul

Ḥadīth and Deobandis who were at the forefront of refuting the Christian missionaries; there was a continuation and increase of the Islāmic revival that had begun at the beginning of the consolidation of British power in India, after the Mughal Empire had collapsed. The actual impact of the missionaries on the Indian society is evident in the following section.

After the mutiny it was slow progress with regards to the willingness of the missionaries to work in North India. One can only be lead to believe that the mutiny itself was a deterrent to the Christian missionaries coming from the west. Webster (1976) mentions that in 1864 in North India there were 216 communicant members and by 1870 this had increased by only 20. Below, Table 1, illustrates the increase in the number of communicant members who were directly involved in the missions.

Table 1

Communicant Members involved with the North India missions 1864 – 1914

Year	Number of communicant members in North India
1864	216
1867	226
1870	235
1872	250
1878	313
1882	380
1885	404
1893	489
1903	701
1908	1897
1914	2938 (25,681)

Note Adapted from *The Christian Community and change in nineteenth century north India* by J. Webster, 1976, the University of Michigan. Copyright (1976) by Macmillan Co. of India.

One can deduce from Table 1 that the turn of the century saw a rapid increase in the number of members in Northern India, however before this the number of members was very low. As aforementioned, the mutiny was seen as a punishment from God by some of the missionaries and they believed that they had not done justice to the cause; it seems strange that after the mutiny the effort put in by the missionaries seems no stronger than that before the mutiny. However, we also see a great increase in the number of communicant members at the turn of the century, this period coincides with when Ahmed Riḍa was at his most influential. Ahmed Riḍa seems much more lenient towards the Christian missionaries than he was towards the different sects in Islām during this time, was it that he did not see them as much of a threat or was it because that the missionaries held similar beliefs to him as opposed to the Deobandis who were against shrine and saint worship? Webster (1976, p. 93) mentions that from that which the missionaries would preach would be that ‘themselves they cannot

satisfy God's demand of holiness and righteousness a point that Ahmed Riḍa would also propagate.⁷

As for the number of converts to Christianity then again it was slow progress in the North Western Provinces. Below, Table 2 illustrates the number of converts from the different religions to Christianity both pre and post mutiny.

Table 2

Number of converts from different backgrounds after pre and post mutiny missions

Background	1834-57		1858-86	
	Number of Converts	Percentage	Number of Converts	Percentage
Muslim	18	38	21	32
Brahmin	10	21	28	42
High Caste Hindu	9	20	7	10
Hindu unspecified	5	11	7	10
Low caste	4	9	3	5
Sikh	1	2	0	0
Total	47	100	66	100

Note Adapted from *The Christian Community and change in nineteenth century north India* by J. Webster, 1976, the University of Michigan. Copyright (1976) by Macmillan Co. of India.

One can see from the table that the number of converts was very little, between the years 1834 and 1886, only 39 people reverted from Islām to Christianity. However, although there were only a small number of converts Christianity was still being spread. There were people being affected by Christianity but not to the extent that they would leave Islām. You would find that these people would have a Muslim name and believe in Muḥammad but at the same time be inclined to do certain rituals from Hinduism or even Christianity. One finds that certain rituals from Hinduism and Christianity would find their way into the Islāmic religion by the way of culture, this would be a result of the Christian propagation in India (Crooke, 1897)⁸. Significantly, while the literature discussing the different missionary efforts in India in the late 19th century mention in detail certain debates with Muslim scholars, nothing is mentioned about Ahmed Riḍa, therefore one has to assume that no dialogue occurred between Ahmed Riḍa and the missionaries. This will be discussed in more depth in 3rd and 4th chapters. Likewise, one finds that the literature surrounding Islām in India in the 19th century alludes to the fact that Islām was affected by other religions to a certain extent (Walls, 2002) however one wants to explore how much effect, if any, the other religions had on Ahmed Riḍa, therefore the next section mentions in some detail the sects and trends that were prevalent in India in the 19th century.

⁷ See chapter 2

⁸ See section 1.1.2

1.5 Sects and trends in Indian Islām

Interfaith dialogue between Muslims and Christians in India was prevalent in the Mid-19th century. As discussed above, from 1830 onwards the missionaries were seen to be more active in their call, this resulted in the Muslims defending their ground and thus inevitably led to dialogues between the two religions. We have mentioned the main debate in the mid-1850s between Pfander and al-Kairanawi, however, smaller and shorter dialogues existed between the two. After the mutiny the missionaries carried on spreading the message of Christianity. Between 1870 and 1880, the missionaries would carry on propagating their religion and try to convert people to Christianity, however not at the level that was seen in in mid-19th century by the likes of Pfander and others. For example, in 1880s British nurses in Bareilly would give medical help to the local people but at the same time give Bible classes to their patients (Singh, 2000). It was at this time, Ahmed Riḍa, was becoming more of a prominent figure in society and towards the end of the century the tide had changed to intra-faith dialogue and debate. Even though the missionaries were still propagating their call, Ahmed Riḍa saw that it was incumbent upon himself to flush out what he believed were enemies of Islām. He saw the enemies within as being more dangerous than the outward enemies and this is evident from his fatāwa which revolved around the sects of Islām, specifically the Deobandis; sources are silent on any fatāwa regarding the Christian missionaries.

Below is an outline of some of the prominent Islāmic sects in India in the 19th century. These sects need to be mentioned as there is a possibility that Ahmed Riḍa was affected by some of them in one aspect or another.

1.5.1 Deoband

Deoband is a school of thought that was founded by a group of Indian Muslims namely Rashid Ahmad Gangohi and Muḥammad Yaqub Nanautawi; this sect arose in India in the middle of the 19th century. The name ‘Deoband’ is in reference to the city in which this sect arose and lies in the north of India. They have claimed that their ideology is a return to Qur’ān and Sunnah and are well known for their madrasa ‘Dar ul ‘uloom’ which initially was a small primary school and was later raised to the status of madrasa in 1866 (Reetz, 2006). From the leading figures of Deoband was haji Imdad-Ullah and Muḥammad Qasim. Gordon (2014, p. 83) believes that the rising of this sect was seen as response to the dangers brought by the British, he mentions that the Deoband are ‘the Hanafī school of jurisprudence adopted by some Mughals but was nevertheless a puritanical reformist movement in response to the perceived modernisation then being imposed by the encroaching British’. However, like mentioned above, even if the school was primarily set up to defend the Muslims against ‘modernisation,’ there were some individuals within this sect that believed that the future lay with the western civilisation like the likes of Obaidullah Sindhi. According to al-Juhani (1999), the beliefs of the Deoband are based upon those of Abu Mansūr al Maturidi. Dr Ghalib al ‘Awāji (2010) mentions that al Maturidi studied the *Hanafi* jurisprudence with the major scholars of his time and became a

leading scholar of the Hanafī school of thought. He only accepted eight of the attributes of Allah. He believed that imān does not increase nor does it decrease, thus, the Deobandis are on the school of thought of al Maturidi. With regards to their beliefs about the Messenger, the Deobandis held the position that the messenger was human and not divine; this was something that Ahmed Riḍa would vigorously deny and it was from the beliefs that would be vehemently refuted by him in his fatāwa and books. Ahmed Riḍa would take a harsh stance against the Deobandis.

1.5.2 Qādiriyya

Qādiriyya is a ṣufī movement that has its origin from `Abdul Qādir al Jilāni who was born in 1077 and died in 1166. This movement should not be confused with the Qādariyya sect, who rejects the notion of Qadr⁹. It is important that this sect is mentioned as Ahmed Riḍa was initiated into this ṣufī order. Many of the ṣufī sects have similar beliefs, from the major beliefs of the Qādiriyyah is waḥdatul wujūd, to believe that Allāh is present everywhere. From those who were affected by waḥdatul wujūd was ibn `Arabi, in his books *Fusus al Hikam* and *Futuhaat al Makiyyah* he mentions the notion of waḥdatul wujūd and discusses how there is no difference between the creator and the creation and indicates that the two are inseparable (al Awāji, 2010), this belief no doubt go against the beliefs held by Orthodox Muslims. Moreover, they believe the saints whom they venerate can perform miracles; from these miracles supposedly documented mentioned was that al Jilāni was able to fly in the sky and that when he was a baby still in his cradle he fasted the month of Ramadan. Ahmed Riḍa believed it to be obligatory for a Muslim to be initiated into a Ṣufī order and that one cannot get to Allah except through a ṣufī saint.

1.5.3 Aḥmediyyah

Ghulam Ahmed Qādiyāni, the founder of this movement, was born in 1839 in one of the suburbs of Punjab. His father worked for the British Government and when he was older he too found a job with the British government. After a while he became ill, this illness had a lasting effect on his mental state; he later believed he was a Prophet of Allāh. He went further to say that he was the best of the Prophets. Ghulam Ahmad to many Muslims was audacious as they would regard him as an individual who belittled Allāh. the Prophet Muḥammad and his companions. In his book *al Bushra*, which Zaheer (2007, p. 92) mentions, he said 'Allah told me, I pray and I fast, I sleep...Allah said to me: 'you are from me and I from you'. It is not surprising that some of the Muslim historians were of the opinion that it was the British who used Ghulam Ahmed to try to ruin Islām (Mahmood, 2012). Ahmed Riḍa was very staunch and harsh against Ghulam Ahmed.

1.5.4 Ahl ul Ḥadīth

Ahl ul Ḥadīth literally means the People of Hadith. They are a group of people who see it obligatory to return back to the Qur'ān and Sunnah; they base their beliefs and actions upon the way of the pious predecessors. Therefore, they oppose Ahl ar Rai'

⁹ Qadr: Divine Will and Decree

those who return the understanding to their intellect. Ahl ul Ḥadīth can be traced back to tabi`īn or to the early period of Islām. However, Ahl ul Ḥadīth in India can be traced back to Shah Wali Ullaah, this point is echoed by Gordon (2014, p. 83) who states that the Ahl ul Ḥadīth are the ‘intellectual heir to Shah Wali Ullah in the eighteenth century’. Ahmed Riḍa deemed the Ahl ul Ḥadīth, or anyone who resembles them, to be enemies to Islām; he believed that they resembled the Wahhabis of Najd in the Arabian Peninsula. From the torchbearers of the Ahl ul Ḥadīth in the mid- 19th century in India was Sideeq Hasan Khan. Khan was known for his position against Ṣufism and the veneration of shrines, which clearly went against the belief of Ahmed Riḍa Bareilvi. Hasan Khan believed that the Islām that was currently being practiced in India at that time had been influenced by Hinduism due to the similar customs of shrine worshipping. Hasan Khan saw it to be obligatory upon him to free Islām of these Hindu traits. He and others were influenced by the works of Ibn Taymiyyah and his student ibn Qayyim al Jawziyyah who in turn were influenced by the ḥanbali school of thought. The beliefs of Ahl ul Ḥadīth are based around three main topics; the first being uluhiyāt, the worship of Allah, they believe that Allah should be the only one who should be worshipped as Allah is perfect and deserves to be worshipped. In addition, they believed that Allah has names and attributes but these names and attributes are not similar to the names and attributes of human being. They were harsh against shrine and saint worship and believed that it was a form of shirk. The second topic is Nubawāt or Prophethood, they believe that all messengers were sent by Allah, all with same message; the Messengers were all human beings and none were divine in any form. Lastly, the third aspect which is al ma’ād, it is the belief that all humans will all return back to Allah and be held accountable for our actions. We will see in the next chapter the position of Ahmed Riḍa with regards to the ‘Wahhabis.’

1.5.5 Nadwa

In the mid to late 19th century the Muslims wanted to work together to bring unity amongst themselves, so the Nadwa was set up to improve relations between the different ideologies.

Reetz (2006, p. 67) mentions that ‘the Nadwa was founded as a council of religious scholars at a convocation ceremony at the Madrasa Faiz-I Amm in 1892. The meeting was convened to improve religious learning, to harmonize sectarian differences and to reconcile religious studies with modern requirements’. An important point to mention here was that Ahmed Riḍa was against this movement and did not co-operate with their efforts to reunite the Muslims of India.

1.5.6 Hinduism

Hinduism is an ancient religion; some would say that it originated close to 5000 years ago (Lovelace & White, 1997). Hinduism was no doubt a major religion in North West India in the 19th century alongside Islām. The Hindus believe in one main God, the many gods and goddesses worshipped by Hindus represent different ways to that one God. The Hindus believe that everything that exists is a part of God, as

Lovelace and White (1997, p. 8) quotes from Svestashvatara Upanishad 6:11 that ‘there is only one God, that resides deep inside all objects and beings. He is everywhere and the inner self of all’, this is strikingly similar to that of the beliefs of the Qādiriyya. Also from the beliefs of the Hindus is samsara, which is the Hindu understanding of reincarnation. They believe that their souls (atman) will move through different stages and different lifeforms, and eventually their souls will unite with God which is referred to as Moksha. They believe that the world is always going through three stages birth, growth and death, these three have corresponding deities known as Trimurti which are represented by Brahama, Vishnu and Shiva (Lovelace & White, 1997). Also from the beliefs of the Hindus is the issue of sainthood, Renard (1999, p. 81) mentions ‘every famous saint represents an embodiment of the deity to whom he or she was dedicated’. A devotee to a saint will call and worship his or her saint, furthermore the saint will be enshrined in temples after their death. The Hindus also believe that the soul goes through many stages in life, it can reach a state of turiya, which is a state of trance. It is understood that this person at the turiya stage is in constant view of God, until they believe that the person will be constantly in union with God (Reddy, 2011).

Aforementioned are some of the beliefs held by Hindus, it is interesting to see that some of the Hindu beliefs resemble certain beliefs of Christianity. This view was echoed somewhat by Renard (1999, p. 81) ‘Perhaps the best known equivalent of Christianity’s saints are India’s sadhus, men and woman who have reached a level of achievement called sadhana (gaining) characterized by enlightenment and supernatural powers’. An important question that needs to be asked as Hinduism and Christianity are religions older than Islām, was Ahmed Riḍa affected by any of the two or even both?

In this chapter, one has explored the historical and religious situation that surrounded Ahmed Riḍa in the mid to late 19th century, a period that was dubbed as a century of renaissance as there was ‘economic, religious, social and literal changes that took place during this period’(Chaurasia, 2002, p.315). It is important to recognise the various faiths that were active in north-west India in the mid-19 century as all these different streams of belief were flowing around Ahmed Riḍa and he could have been influenced by any of them. The next chapter will look to see the role Ahmed Riḍa had to play in this century of renaissance.

CHAPTER 2 BIOGRAPHY

The previous chapter looked to explore the religious situation that surrounded Ahmed Riḍa in the late 19th century which could lead to answers on possible effects on Ahmed Riḍa. However, as this research is specifying Ahmed Riḍa, his beliefs and possible effects on him, one needs to spend some time examining the educational period of Ahmed Riḍa's life, therefore this chapter will look to explore the life of Ahmed Riḍa and his beliefs before examining the resemblances between the beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa and Christianity.

2.1 Background and Early Years

Ahmed Riḍa was born on the 14th of June 1856, in the city of Bareilly situated in the Province of Uttar Pradesh, North West India. He was named Muḥammad by his father but named Ahmed by his grandfather which would be the name that he would be known by others in his life (Zaheer, 2011). He named himself `Abd al Mustapha, the servant of the chosen one, the chosen one being the Prophet Muḥammad. His ancestors were originally from Afghanistan, and it was his forefathers who moved to India during the Moghul dynasty. His forefathers were known to have worked for the government including the government under the British rule, however, for reasons that are not mentioned, the grandfather of Ahmed Riḍa, Hasan Raza, was the first of his family to discontinue the connection with the British government and fought with General Bakht Khan against the British in 1834 (Sanyal, 2005). Furthermore, it was within this generation that the custom of taṣawwuf was introduced in the family and Hasan Raza was the first to have gained Islāmic knowledge under Mowlana Khaleel ur Rahman (Cassim, 2010). Thus, the trend within his family shifted from being pro-government to being anti-government and gave rise to a generation dedicated to Islāmic knowledge.

The father of Ahmed Riḍa, Naqī Ali Khan, was from the scholars of the ḥanafī madhhab in his time (Zaheer, 2011) and Naqī Ali Khan's father was one of his main teachers, therefore it can be established that this Islāmic knowledge that was possessed by Ahmed Riḍa originated from his grandfather. He grew up under the careful supervision of his father and there are narrations of his pious upbringing (Sanyal, 2005). Those who have written about Ahmed Riḍa have mentioned that he was gifted and pious from a young age, he would fast the month of Ramaḍān; one day during the month of Ramaḍān his father entered with his son into a room where sweets were kept and allowed him to take from the room what he wanted, Ahmed Riḍa replied that he was fasting and his Lord was all seeing. At the age of six he gave his first lecture with which the audience were 'profoundly impressed' with (Cassim, 2010, p. 13). He never attended school, he was home tutored by his father; it has already been mentioned that the possible reason for this was because of the fear that

his son might be affected by the Christian Missionaries.¹⁰ In addition to this, Sanyal (1996) suggests that it was due to the British control over the madrasas.

Naqi Ali Khan had many children but none of them were gifted like Ahmed Riḍa. Sanyal (2005, p. 56) mentions that Ahmed Riḍa showed signs of his capabilities from a young age; she mentions that ‘biographies are replete with stories of Ahmed Riza’s precociousness as a child’ and that he had ‘accomplished extraordinary intellectual feats’. He was known for his eloquence and knowledge from such a young age (Cassim, 2010), he was well known amongst his followers for his great memory as Hasan (2005, p.15) mentions ‘he had a phenomenal memory- no wonder he could pile up proofs upon proofs for his arguments, sometimes a single fatwa 50 pages contains reference from so many sources even half of which cannot be found in multi volume works’. He was also known for his kindness and generosity; he would never reject a request from anyone be it the person was from his students or a poor person. He would not get angry and would treat people with humbleness and piety (Cassim, 2010). It should be mentioned that the above literature are evidently hagiographies and the aforementioned points have been mentioned to clarify what is said about Ahmed Riḍa in the different biographies.

Contrary to this, although his devotees praise his character and qualities, others seem to have found that which suggests otherwise. Zaheer (2011) comments that much of what is mentioned within his biographies are an exaggeration from his followers. It is obvious that his adversaries were not of the same opinion as his followers; Ihsan Ilahi Zaheer was from those who are against what Ahmed Riḍa propagated. Zaheer in his book *the realities of Bareilawi’ism* quotes individuals that were once close to Ahmed Riḍa, but soon distanced themselves from him due to what he was upon; furthermore, he also includes information about the negative characteristics that biographers of Ahmed Riḍa, such as Sanyal and Cassim, fail to mention. He narrates how Muḥammad Yasin, a teacher of Ahmed Riḍa, abandoned him as a student because of his “callousness and harshness” (Zaheer, 2011, p. 12). Additionally, the management of the madrasah that his father built, Misbah al Tadhhib, ‘side-lined’ (Zaheer, 2011, p. 12) him and he was ‘abandoned’ (Zaheer, 2011, p. 12) by every other madrasah in that area because bad temper and harshness. Zaheer (2011), moreover, argues that he was well known for his forgetfulness and relates a story where Ahmed Riḍa once placed his own spectacles on his forehead and had completely forgotten where he had put them, this is also mentioned by his disciple Zafar Uddin Bihari in *Hayat e Ala Hazrat* (2003). There is no mention of these characteristics within biographies of Ahmed Riḍa in the English medium, however, literature in the Urdu medium contain numerous examples of this such as the biography *Hayat aur Karnamay* (2002) written by Muḥammad Abdur Rahman, which specializes in examining his fatāwa of kufr.

It is apparent that there are two different opinions with regards to Ahmed Riḍa, those who are from his supporters like Sanyal and Cassim; both believe that he was a very

¹⁰ See section 1.3.1

intelligent and a gifted person and that his memory was outstanding; in addition, they claim that he was loved by his friends and teachers. In contrast to this, Zaheer argues that he, Ahmed Riḍa, indeed was a man of forgetfulness, and that what has been mentioned about his genius nature is only a way to fool the masses. Zaheer (2011, p. 13) states that the ‘bareilvis concoct fantastical stories and baseless incidents to exaggerate the excellence of their imam’. Understanding the reasons for the different conclusions that each of these groups come to, one must examine the sources of evidence and arguments used by each and their intentions. One could say that Zaheer was an adversary to the madhab of Ahmed Riḍa and thus wanted to belittle him; however, Zaheer manages to quote and cite from not only secondary sources such as Ahmed Riḍa’s biographies, including Zafar Uddins biography, but primary sources too, such as his authored books and from those who used to be close to Ahmed Riḍa, making his claims more credible than one initially believes. Considering the stories cited by his supporters, they too are cited from the biographies of Ahmed Riḍa, and his own works. A close examination of these claims present inconsistencies and contradictions, an example of such can be seen in the following, Muḥammad Asgar Alwi who states that ‘Ahmed Raza never uttered any word that was not according to the sharia. Allāh kept him safe’ (Zaheer, 2011, p. 15-16). However, it is evident from *Hayat aur Karnamay* that he used excessive foul language to address those who were against his school of thought and beliefs and other than them (Abdur Rahman, 2002). In addition to this example is the difference in claims on the number of books written by Ahmed Riḍa, some narrate that he wrote over 1000 books while others mention that he wrote no more than 200. Zaheer (2011, p. 26) claims ‘that in fact he authored no more than ten books’. We understand that although Ahmed Riḍa wanted to defend his understanding of Islām and his impact was immense on his followers, it is however apparent that his followers have exaggerated his position to the extent one cannot tell the reality from falsehood.

Ahmed Riḍa married in 1874 and had two sons and five daughters. His two sons, Hamid and Mustapha were also known for their knowledge and they were the ones who carried on their father’s legacy after him (Cassim, 2010).

2.1 Bai`a and Hajj

Ahmed Riḍa believed that pledging allegiance to a pir was obligatory so at the age of 22, in the year 1877, Ahmed Riḍa went to Marehra Shareef to pledge allegiance to pir Shah Aale Rasool al Marehrawi. He was invited by one of the teachers and mentors of his father, Abdul Qādir Badayouni. Sanyal (1996) mentions that it was Ahmed Riḍa and his father who went together to pledge allegiance to become murīds of Shah Aale Rasool, however, Cassim (2010) mentions that it was Ahmed Riḍa and the mentor of his father Badayouni who took this journey and there is no mention of the father. Both mention that Shah Aale Rasool had been waiting for Ahmed Riḍa and now that he had accepted them as disciples he could pass away in peace. Ahmed Riḍa undertook this journey before he went to ḥajj after having a ‘painful spiritual longing’ to be a murīd

(Sanyal, 1996, p.59). Shah Aale Rasool gave both father and son permission to accept disciples in all the Şufi orders (Sanyal, 1996).

After his spiritual journey to becoming a murīd, Ahmed Riḍa travelled with his father for the ḥajj journey. He made this journey twice in his life, the first of which was in 1878 which marked another important chapter in his life. During this journey he met some of the muftis of Makkah namely Ahmed Dahlan, who was the mufti of the Shafi'is, and Abdur Rahman Siraj, the mufti of the ḥanafis. Ahmed Riḍa 'obtained certificates (sanads)' (Sanyal, 1996 p.61) in different Islāmic fields of knowledge from both Ahmed Dahlan and Abdur Rahman Siraj. The second Hajj that he performed was in 1905 at the age of 49. This trip was also memorable and significant to him as it is mentioned that he saw the Messenger while writing poetry about him.

2.2 Education

It is commonly understood that one is a product of his society and education thus to determine the reasons as to why the beliefs and practices of Ahmed Riḍa resembled that of Catholicism, an in-depth study into his education needs to be done and thus explore where his beliefs stemmed from. Investigation needs to focus on his teachers and which subjects he studied.

It has been mentioned that the literature alludes to the fact that Naqi Ali Khan was averse to the government schools in North India and therefore we can assume that Ahmed Riḍa was home schooled by his father, and the literature states that Naqi Ali Khan was no doubt instrumental in instilling the beliefs that Ahmed Riḍa propagated. Moreover, it is important to recognise that the first person to gain Islāmic knowledge within the family, which was then passed down to his father, was his grandfather, Hasan Raza Ali Khan. Consequently, focus must be given to the father and grandfathers' education and their beliefs to ascertain what type of belief they would instil into their respective sons.

Raza Ali Khan was the first to introduce taşawwuf into his family, he was known to be a great şufi saint and by the age of 23 he had finished his Islāmic education (Cassim, 2010). Unfortunately, sources are limited in providing historical information about Ahmed Riḍa's grandfather and what is known of him is almost inconceivable. However, there is some literature within the Urdu medium with regards to Naqi Ali Khan, his father; from the biography *Allama Maulana Naqi Ali Khan Hayat aur Karnamay* (2005) written by Dr Mohammad Hassan, one is able to form a picture of the ideas within the mind of his father.

2.2.1 Naqi Ali Khan

One learns from this concise biography that amidst the storm of trials that were overtaking the Muslims i.e. the British rule and the splitting of the Muslim nation in India, he claims that the nation was in need of an individual who would solve the problems of the Muslims in India and this was to be Naqi Ali Khan, who was

supposedly an `alim of his time. He was also known to be pious. He had knowledge in the following fields:

1. Qur'ān
2. Tafsīr
3. Ḥadīth
4. Usūl al ḥadīth
5. Taṣawwuf
6. Arabic poetry
7. Farsi
8. Recitation of the Qur'ān with tajwīd
9. History
10. Philosophy
11. `Ilm e Jafar
12. Arabic grammar
13. `Ilm e zaycha
14. Obligations
15. Fiqh ḥanafī
16. Debate and dialouge
17. `Ilm kalām
18. `Aqīdah

If we compare this to Ahmed Riḍa's statement mentioning the fields of knowledge he learnt from his father, they coincide; in his book *al ijaazatul mateena* he states "I learnt these twenty branches of knowledge, personally at the feet of my father" (Khan, 1985, p. 22)

1. Tafsīr of the holy Qur'ān
2. Tashrīḥ of ḥadīth
3. Principles of ḥadīth
4. Islāmīc Jurisprudence (all four schools of thought)
5. Principles of Jurisprudence
6. Dialectics
7. Qur'anic commentary
8. Principles of Belief
9. Principles of debate
10. Arabic Syntax
11. Principles of Rhetoric
12. Language usage of metaphors
13. Science dealing with rhetoric
14. Logic
15. Debate
16. Philosophy and Politics
17. Rhetoric devices

- 18. Physics
- 19. Mathematics
- 20. Physical Engineering

It is clearly visible that Ahmed Riḍa took the fundamentals of the religion from his father, this is a point that Sanyal (2005) emphasises stating that Ahmed Riḍa's main ideologies reflect that of his father. This will become more apparent in the section outlining his beliefs.

It is important to mention that Naqī Ali Khan took part in a debate which discussed the omnipotence of Allāh. In this debate a very important matter was discussed known as 'imkan-e nazir' or the possibility of an equal. This revolved around the issue of the ability of Allāh, whether he was able to create another equal to the Prophet Muḥammad. Any general Muslim would believe that Allāh is able to do everything, so the possibility of Allāh creating another creation similar to the prophet is definitely possible; however, Naqī Ali Khan opposed such an idea, believing that there could be no one like the messenger and that Allāh is not able to create the likes of the Messenger (Sanyal, 2005). This understanding of Naqī Ali Khan gives an insight to his 'aqīdah showing us that he believed that Allāh is not all-powerful.

It is also important to mention that Naqī Ali Khan was opposed to the 'Nejdis' or the 'Wahhabis' who were in the Arab peninsula. The Wahhabis were a group of People led by Muḥammad ibn `Abdil Wahhāb, this group used to call to the worship of Allah without intermediaries, they believe that seeking intermediaries with Allāh was from the religion of the polytheist. This sect believed that Allāh is All Able thus opposing the understanding of Naqī Ali Khan; Ahmed Riḍa's successors until today oppose the way of Muḥammad ibn `Abdil Wahhāb. It should also be noted that Naqī Ali Khan opposed Sayyid Ahmed Khan and believed Sayyid Ahmed Khan had an incorrect stance towards the British (Sanyal, 2005). He wrote many books, from them *Suroor al Quloob fi Zikri Mahboob* written in which indicates that he believed in celebrating the Prophets birthday. He passed away when Ahmed Riḍa was 23 years of age (Cassim, 2010).

2.2.2 Other branches of knowledge

There are other subjects that Ahmed Riḍa studied by himself:

- Horoscopes
- Numerology
- Astronomical tables
- Modern astronomy

There were some subjects that he did not study but as his followers describe it as though he was 'inspired' by Allāh; from these subjects was 'ilm e jafar or 'sciences of the knowledge of prediction' or 'inspired knowledge' (Cassim, 2010); so it seems that

Ahmed Riḍa believed that he was inspired with the knowledge of the unseen, the following story clarifies this

There was a nawaab of Rampur whose wife had taken very ill. He loved her dearly and was very thus very fond of her. The nawaab who 43 was a “budmazhab” (one holding corrupt beliefs), sent an envoy to Bareilly Shareef with a special request. He requested A’la Hazrat to predict the time and place of his wife’s death. The nawaab’s wife was, at that moment, not at her mansion in Rampur, but she was in a place called Nainital. A’la Hazrat τ told the envoy to tell the nawaab that his wife will die in Rampur in the month of Muharram. The envoy returned to the nawaab and gave him the message of A’la Hazrat. With this message of A’la Hazrat τ at the back of his mind, the nawaab tried very hard to keep his wife from returning to Rampur. He did not want her to be anywhere near the city of Rampur. It happened such that rioting broke out in Rampur. This was concerning the affairs of the Kanpur Shaheed Ganj Musjid. The Governor summoned the nawaab to meet with him urgently in Rampur. The nawaab decided to go on his own, but his wife insisted on joining him. As soon as they reached Rampur, the King's wife suddenly died. It was also the month of Muharram. The prediction of A’la Hazrat proved to be true! (Cassim, 2010, p. 42-43).

A further example of ʿilm e Jafar is his prediction of the date of the coming of the Anti-Christ (Cassim, 2010). From the subjects he was inspired with were:

- Poetry
- Inheritance
- Calligraphy
- Tajwīd

One must note that tajwīd was actually a branch of knowledge that his father, learnt from his father, Cassim (2010) however, mentions that it was a subject that he was inspired with directly from Allāh.

2.2.3 Other main teachers of Ahmed Riḍa

He studied with the likes of:

- Mawlana Shah Rahm Ilahi Muglori
- Mawlana Sayed Basheer Ahmed Aligarhi
- Mawlana Zahurul Hussain Rampuri
- Ahmed bin Zayni Dahlan (Cassim, 2010);

No information is present about these teachers and only their names are mentioned. In addition to these teachers, Mirza Ghulam Qadir Baig, who is mentioned to be the brother of Ghulam Ahmed Qādiyāni who believed himself to be a Prophet after Prophet Muḥammad (Zaheer, 2011), was from his first teachers. Sanyal (2005, p. 55) mentions that Ahmed Riḍa “retained a lifelong affection, sending him fatāwa whenever he requested”.

It is interesting to know that Ahmed Dahlan, who resided in Makkah was a person who opposed the Wahhabi movement. Dahlan wrote a book where he refuted the principals of the Wahhabis and defended the belief that praying to the people of the graves is allowed; however, this book was refuted by as Sahsawani (1932) by bringing 250 points counteracting the arguments of Dahlan. The supporters of as Sahsawani still wait for a response from those oppose the Wahhabi methodology. It seems likely that Ahmed Riḍa gained his hatred for the Wahhabis from Dahlan. Some claim that the British used Dahlan to weaken the Muslims in the Arab peninsula and they used Ahmed Riḍa to weaken the Muslims in the Indian subcontinent (Mahmood, 2012). It should be mentioned that the biographies written about the education of Ahmed Riḍa do not mention any time spent reading or learning about other religions especially Christianity, the biographies about his life do not mention any meetings Ahmed Riḍa may have had with any Christians or him witnessing Christian activities in his area. Therefore, in summary, according to the biographies of Ahmed Riḍa, he did not attend any government school, this would nullify the possibility of Ahmed Riḍa coming across Christianity through the route of school education and the biographies of Ahmed Riḍa and his own works are silent on Ahmed Riḍa witnessing any Christian forms of worship. This point will be explored in more depth in the 3rd and 4th chapters.

2.3 *His works*

Some of the key works of Ahmed Riḍa are as follows:

- Fatāwa ar Raḍawiyya

This is a compilation of many of the fatāwa that were given by Ahmed Riḍa regarding different issues and is especially famous for the fatāwa of kufr.

- Dawlatu al Makkiyyah

This book was written during his second trip to Makkah for ḥajj in 1905. The Imāms of the ḥaramain who were employed by the ottoman government were not able to answer some of the questions posed to them by the Wahhabis so they requested that Ahmed Riḍa write a response which he named *Dawlatu al Makkiyyah* (Cassim, 2010).

- Khalis al I'tiqād

This book mentions his beliefs in general but gives importance to his beliefs with regards to the messenger.

- Hidāiq Bakhshish

In this book Ahmed Riḍa mentions his beliefs about saints generally, but specifies Abdul Qādir Jilāni.

- Malfuzāt

This book contains certain narrations and fatāwa from Ahmed Riḍa. The fatāwa are concentrated around issues of `aqīdah.

2.4: Beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa from his works

In this section one will focus on the works of Ahmed Riḍa to extract his beliefs. This will give us an idea of the main doctrines that Ahmed Riḍa advocated through his own works. Once the beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa have been collated one can then look to explore the resemblances between Ahmed Riḍa's beliefs and Christianity. As aforementioned the main works of Ahmed Riḍa will be used to extract his beliefs. The methodology used in this section is a book by book methodology, therefore Ahmed Riḍa's beliefs will be extracted from a certain book before moving on to a different book.

2.4.1: *Salat as Safa fi nuri al Mustapha* (1985)

This book by Ahmed Riḍa is dedicated to the topic surrounding his belief that Muhammad was created with the light of Allāh. This piece of literature is part of the compiled work of Ahmed Riḍa, *Fatāwa ar Riḍawiyyah* (1985). The following are extracts from his book.

Mas'ala 38:

Q. what do the 'ulamah say about the issue of Muhamad being created from light and from his light the rest of creation? Which hadeeth confirms this and what type of hadeeth is this?

A. Hadeeth Jabir in *Musanaf Abdur razaq*;

O Messenger of Allāh, may my father and mother be sacrificed for you, tell me of the first thing Allāh created before all things." He said: O Jābir, the first thing Allāh created was the light of your Prophet from His light, and that light remained in the

midst of His Power for as long as He wished, and there was not, at that time, a Tablet or a Pen or a Paradise or a Fire or an angel or a heaven or an earth. And when Allāh wished to create creation, he divided that Light into four parts and from the first made the Pen, from the second the Tablet, from the third the Throne, then He divided the fourth into four parts [and from them created everything else

It should be mentioned that mas'ala 39 was a similar question and the very same answer was given.

Mas'ala 40

Q. If the messenger is created from light and from light of the messenger the rest of the creation, you have mentioned in previous fatwa that the rest of mankind are created from dirt, so how can we connect between the two, meaning do we understand that the rest of mankind is from the light of Muhammad as the narration states or from dirt as you have mentioned.

A. The understanding is that not all of the creation is from the light of Muhammad it is only the other messengers are from the nur and also Hasan and Husayn were also created pure. The wording in the hadeeth is only to help understand.

Mas'ala 41

Q. Was the messenger created from light and if so was he created from essence of Allāh or from the attributes of Allāh or both and what is meant by nur?

A. Muhammad was created from the light of the very essence of Allāh and from the light of Allāh everything else was created this is confirmed in an authentic source [the source is not mentioned].

Mas'ala 42

Q. Is the messenger a piece of Allāh

A. Ghauth al A'zam mentions in his book Sir al asraar 'to state that he the messenger is a piece of Allah is an act of Kufr, but we say that he is the light of guidance or the light of mankind'

Ahmed Riḍa also argues within this work that the messenger did not have a shadow and thus reiterating the fact the messenger was created by the light of Allāh.

From the aforementioned extracts, a number of observations can be made - it is evident that Ahmed Riḍa stresses that the unique nature of the Prophet which stems from the way in which Muhammad was created. He argues that the messenger was created from the very essence of Allāh. He mentions this in a number of his other works which will be shortly discussed. However, in contrast and a seemingly strange contradiction, he indicates that it is not permissible to state that Muhammad is from Allāh by using the statements of Ghawth al A'zam to give his fatwa, this is further

supported by another fatwa on page 37 stating that ‘ Muhammad is neither from Allāh nor other than Allāh.’

Furthermore, in a fatwa within this work of his, he mentions that the messenger is the soul of everything that exists and if he had not been created nothing would exist. This statement illustrates to the reader that indeed Ahmed Riḍa believed that the Prophet had a status well above that of a normal man, in fact almost divine, as creation was dependant on him if he states that ‘if he had not been created nothing would have existed.’ This bold declaration alludes to his belief of the Prophet Muhammad having godlike nature.

2.4.2: *Al Amn Wa Ula* (2002)

The majority of this book centres on the theme of the Prophets and the awliya’s ability to remove calamities.

The following are extracts from the fatāwa given by Ahmed Riḍa in this book

- 1) ‘The Wahhabis do not believe that the Messenger has the ability to remove calamities, because of this belief of the Wahhabis the Messenger will not remove any of their calamities’ (Khan, 2002, p.105).
- 2) ‘Nothing occurs and no blessing is given except with permission of the Messenger’ (Khan, 2002, p. 105).

It should be mentioned that Ahmed Riḍa brings approximately 129 hadeeth that he believes that backs up his claim. Below are some examples of the narrations he brings

- 1) ‘Before the coming of the messenger Makkah was a barren land and after the birth the land of Makkah flourished.’
- 2) A hadeeth which is found in *Mustad of Bazar* ‘Be patient and I give you glad tidings that I have blessed you in your provisions’
- 3) Ahmed Riḍa mentions about the messenger ordering the sun to stop: he said to the sun, ‘O sun! You are under Allah’s Order and I am under Allah’s Order O Allah! Stop it [the sun] from setting.’ It was stopped till Allah made him victorious.’ Sahih al Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 53, Number 353

A number of observations can be made from analysing this book, Ahmed Riḍa clearly states that the messenger is someone to go to remove calamities, ‘the Messenger is one the who can aid in troubles, he is the one who can give you better and keep you away from evils’(Khan, 2002, p.10).

He mentions also that ‘to call upon the Awliya and to seek relief and assistance from them is something which is allowed and encouraged.’ (Khan, 2002, p.29)

Furthermore, he states ‘if you find yourself in extreme need, go to Awliya of the graves for assistance.’ (Khan, 2002, p.46) These fatāwa were given in a number of different places and times however with slightly different wording. This shows the continuity in his life he had regarding the belief of intercession and the ability of the Prophets to remove harm, this continuity was also seen in his belief that it is not only permissible but rather it was encouraged and recommended to seek aid from the Awliya. This continuity could be translated into steadfastness in this belief and hence alludes to the reason why he aggressively refuted the Wahhabis of India on this matter, stating them to be disbelievers.

Within this book several references were made refuting the Wahhabi belief that the Prophet will not intercede in this life but only in the Hereafter. When taking into consideration Ahmed Riḍa’s statements regarding the humanity of the Prophet and his divine nature, one can see that Ahmed Riḍa had reverence of the Prophet and thus it seems that anyone who sought to degrade this would be subject to his vehement refutations and his takfeer.

2.4.3: *Malfuzat* (1932)

This book can be split into different sections; much of the first section is dedicated to Ahmed Riḍa and his biography. The following sections concentrate heavily on calling upon the dead for aid. There are also a number of fatwa mentioning the extraordinary capabilities of saints. This book also includes a large number of fatwa on issues of fiqh [jurisprudence].

1) ‘If [angel] Jibreel is able to relieve difficulties then who is to stop the messenger to relieve difficulties, the messenger relieves Jibreel of difficulties.’ (Khan, 1932, p. 99)

2) ‘Ilm al ghaib; the Messenger had the knowledge of the unseen’, he quotes a hadeeth where the Messenger says that he has knowledge of that exists between the east and west, everything has been revealed to him. He knows what is in the Lawh al Mahfuz [preserved tablet] and the knowledge of what will occur from now until the day of judgement’ (Khan, 1932, p. 28)

3) Ghawth al a’zam [Abdul Qādir Jilani] has mentioned that his pupil is fixed on the Lawh al Mahfouz [preserved tablet] (Khan, 1932, p. 30).

4) ‘The Ghawth has knowledge of unseen, the unseen made apparent to them.’ (Khan, 1932, p.88)

4) ‘Without the ghawth [AbdulQādir Jilani] the earths and skies cannot survive.’ (Khan, 1932, p. 87)

5) ‘I do not seek aid except from Abdul Qādir Jilani.’ (Khan, 1932, p. 107)

6) ‘The saints have the capability of being in many different places at one time. They have the ability of being in 10,000 places at one time.’ (Khan, 1932, p.113)

7) 'The one who is present [Allāh] and that which exists is one, everything is from the shadow of the one that is present' (Khan, 1932, P. 115)

It is evident that the creed surrounding the supernatural ability of saints was something Ahmed Riḍa was intensely advocating with several references to saints knowing the 'ilm al ghayb. Thus it can be concluded that Ahmed Riḍa held the belief that saints too had divine nature by believing that they shared the ability of God to know all things, in addition to this, he believed they were able to aid the caller even from the dead which reiterates the idea that saints have a divine nature separate to that of a normal mortal human being.

While the status of the Prophet seems to be given an almost divine position, the awliya also have reached this status according to him, this can be seen by Ahmed Riḍa suggesting that both have the same ability to aid and know the unseen. This could perhaps suggest a Ṣufi influence on his belief as they stress upon the calling of saints and their ability to know the unseen matters, this issue will be discussed in further detail later. It should be mentioned that in this book Ahmed Riḍa alludes to his belief of superstition. He mentions that a person should refrain from cutting cloth on Mondays otherwise it will result in the cloth being burnt or stolen

2.4.4: *Khalis al Itiqad* (1910)

This work of Ahmed Riḍa's is a reply to the request of Sayyid Hussain Haider Mian, asking him to clarify certain issues of creed. The reply by Ahmed Riḍa revolves around the topics of knowledge of the unseen and the special abilities of the saints.

The first issue that Ahmed Riḍa discusses is the knowledge of the unseen and how the Messenger knew the unseen, he states 'the messenger has the knowledge which is contained in the Lawh al Mahfouz [preserved tablet]' (Khan, 1910, p.2). Following on from this argument he refutes the Wahhabis and labels them wrong and misguided for rejecting this notion, 'Whoever rejects that the messenger knew the knowledge of the unseen then he has disbelieved [fallen into kufr].' (Khan, 1910, p. 2)

Another issue that he discusses is the nature of the characteristic of the knowledge of unseen and that it is a part of the Messengers essence or something he was gifted by Allāh. This clearly highlights and strengthens the view that Barelwi considered the Prophet to have abilities that are not seen in a normal man and thus he was of a divine nature as aforementioned, he argues that the Prophets status is based upon his abilities and that due to his possession of divine ability causes him to be of a status that matches it. This perhaps is one of the reasons as to why Ahmed Riḍa revered the Prophet as much as he did.

He states the following:

1) 'Muhammad is the first and the last, the uppermost and innermost; the knowledge of what occurs in the grave has been made apparent to him' (Khan, 1910, p.29)

2) 'The knowledge that which is in the Lawh al Mahfouz is only a piece of his knowledge' (Khan, 1910, p. 38)

3) 'The spirit of the Messenger lives in every Muslims house' (Khan, 1910, p. 40)

Several references have also been made about the ability of the righteous, reiterating the beliefs mentioned in the books discussed above. He argues that Ali also knew the knowledge of what will occur until the day judgement; this knowledge was also for the Ahl al Bayt (Khan, 1910, p. 35). Additionally, he claims that the ghawth al a'zam knew the ilm al ghayb, he knew what was in the hearts of the people (Khan, 1910, p. 36), he quotes ghawth al a'zam, 'You are like mirrors before me, I see what you conceal' (Khan, 1910, p. 37).

The Şufi doctrine becomes more prominent when he discusses the ability of the saints to know the unseen, he mentions that some saints knew 'the time of death and knew what the wombs conceal' (Khan, 1910, p. 35). He also mentions on page 43 that

The messenger knows the five hidden issues that Allāh has kept to himself, and how can it not be known to him when the aqtab as saba' know these five issues and if these seven know then how about the ghawth al a'zam, and if the ghawth al a'zam knows it then how about the one who is the reason for the creation and from stems everything. (Khan, 1910, p.43)

By highlighting the aqtab as saba it is clear that the şufi reverence of saints is a part and parcel of the Bareilvi creed and that much of his belief stems from this sect of Islām.

It should be mentioned here that in this book Ahmed Riḍa specifies the Wahaabis and says that they should 'Weep for verily the messenger is everywhere at once and nothing occurs and nothing will occur except that the messenger is fully aware of it.' (Khan, 1910, p. 46)

2.4.5: *Al Dawlatu al Makkiya* (1975)

This book was written when Ahmed Riḍa travelled to Makkah for Hajj and was asked to clarify his position on the Messenger knowing the unseen. The book was written in eight hours and it is mentioned how the scholars of Makkah were astonished by the written piece.

The book is dedicated to the Messenger having full knowledge of the unseen. The following extracts allude to this point.

1) 'The Messenger had the knowledge of the past and future; there was no limit on his knowledge'. (Khan, 1975, p. 35)

2) 'The Messenger receives aid and help from Allāh and we receive aid and help from the Messenger' (Khan, 1975, p.35)

- 3) 'All the knowledge that exists in the world is a result of the knowledge of the messenger' (Khan, 1975, p.57)
- 4) 'Allāh opened up the earth for me [Muhammad]; verily I am looking at what is in it and what will occur until the day of judgement' (Khan, 1975, p. 57)
- 5) 'The Messenger had encompassed all knowledge' (Khan, 1975, p. 58)
- 6) 'The Wahhabis try to trick and betray the lay people by saying that the Messenger was taught the knowledge of the unseen as a miracle and not from his essence' (Khan, 1975, p. 65)
- 7) 'He had the knowledge of all that was written in the Lawh al Mahfouz' (Khan, 1975, p.68)
- 8) 'The Messenger knows the people of Jannah [Paradise] and Near [Fire]' (Khan, 1975, p. 69)

It should be mentioned here also that Ahmed Riḍa believed that the Messenger had knowledge of the attributes of Allāh (Khan, 1975)

This book reiterates the points aforementioned about Barelwi believing in divine nature of the Prophet and him knowing the unseen and this being a reason as to why he refuted the Wahhabis, it seems as though the conflict between the Wahhabis and Barelwi are based primarily upon their differences on the ability of the Messenger and the saints each claiming a difference in their ability.

2.4.6: *Hawāi al Bakhshish* (1907)

This book once again shows Ahmed Riḍa position regarding the Messenger and super natural ability he and other saints possessed. It also gives the reader a glimpse of the superstitious beliefs Ahmed Riḍa held.

- 1) 'If you mention the messenger's name then have the belief that you see him' (Khan, 1907, p.48)
- 2) 'If you have pins and needles on your foot say yaa Muhammad, your foot will be better' (Khan, 1907, p.48).
- 3) 'You should love the messenger more than you love your mother, father and children' (Khan, 1907, p. 49)
- 4) 'He [Abdul Qādir Jīlāni] is in charge of the affairs of the world and he is the one who gives life and death' (Khan, 1907, p. 127)
- 5) 'He [Abdul Qādir Jīlāni] is the one who is able to fulfil desires and wishes' (Khan, 1907, p. 179)

One person that has constantly been praised and mentioned in his books is Abdul Qādir Jīlāni, his abilities have been highlighted by Ahmed Rīḍa to be godlike, he believed him to have the ability to aid people and know the knowledge that is beyond that of a mortal human.

Summary

From the aforementioned beliefs of Ahmed Rīḍa one can gain a clear understanding of the core beliefs that were stressed by Ahmed Rīḍa. Ahmed Rīḍa emphasised in a number of his works his belief regarding the Messenger. It was his belief that the messenger was created from light, and this light was from the very essence of God. He also believed that the Messenger had divine ability with the capability of relieving calamities that afflicted the people. The Messenger was in charge of what occurred in this existence and had the ability of being in many places at once. Ahmed Rīḍa also mentioned in many of his works his belief regarding saints and he believed that they also had divine powers. He believed that the Ghauth al a'zam was in control of the heavens and the earth. One can begin to understand how strong these beliefs were in the heart of Ahmed Rīḍa as he would make takfir of anyone who did not agree with his stance.

Therefore, aforementioned are the beliefs of Ahmed Rīḍa, one should note that the work of Ahmed Rīḍa have been explored to extract his beliefs. It is important to return back to the work of Ahmed Rīḍa so to get a good idea of his beliefs and to be sure that these beliefs were propagated by him and not that which has been attributed to him unjustly. A fascinating point is that the points and beliefs that Ahmed Rīḍa emphasises in his works are those that have a strong resemblance to Christianity. The next section will begin to look at similarities between the beliefs of Ahmed Rīḍa and Christianity.

CHAPTER 3 RESEMBLANCES

As indicated, this research looks to investigate the similarities between Christianity and Barelvi'ism and possible reasons why. Thus far the research has explored and examined the situation that surrounded in order to find possible reasons for the resemblances. In this section one will investigate the resemblances between the beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa and Christianity. Literature up to date has discussed how Barelvi'ism differs greatly from the Deobandis and the Wahabbis, however no study has compared the similarities it has with Christianity all the while asking a fundamental question *why*; perhaps the similarities between the two may be due to the influences they had on each other or perhaps they might have similar factors influencing them, more than most suspect. Thus, the objective of this section is to identify the resemblances between the beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa and Christianity and once we have identified the resemblances we can start to determine the possible reasons for the similarities between Barelvi'ism and Christianity.

It should be noted that just as Islām has many different sects, Christians also have differences within themselves regarding certain beliefs; however, there are other fundamental beliefs that all Christians agree on. Thus, it is only correct to state that some of the beliefs of the Ahmed Riḍa resembled Christianity in general and other beliefs that Ahmed Riḍa held resembled certain sects of Christianity - and the sect that has the most in common with Barelvi'ism is Catholicism.

3.1 First resemblance- Humanity of Muḥammad and Jesus

A striking resemblance between Barelvi'ism and Christianity is the position regarding the humanity of the central figures of their respective religions, Muḥammad and Jesus; both believe that each of the two have certain attributes that surpass human ability and thus have godly attributes.

One of the beliefs that the Christians differed on is their beliefs surrounding Jesus; to explain this difference one must delve into the books of history to understand the origin of this difference. Three main councils took place: The Council of Nicaea in 325, The Council of Constantinople in 381 and finally The Council of Chalcedon in 451. These councils were organised to flush out the disagreement between the Christians during that period, and one of the main disagreements they had was about the humanity of Jesus. The differences that were present at the Council of Nicaea were that some believed that Jesus was the creator and creation; this stemmed from the ancient understanding of the pre-existence of Jesus and that everything was created from him. While others believed that he was more than man but less than God. It was thus decided as a consequence of the Council of Nicaea that Jesus was begotten not made and therefore he was not creature but in fact he was the creator (Doniger, 1999).

However, this article of the Christian creed was not fully accepted by a number of individuals who believed that Jesus was more than man but less than God, and wanted

a clarification between the Father and the Son. This necessitated a second council which was organised in 381 in Constantinople. The main debating point revolved around the issue of the divinity of Jesus - was Jesus divine or just a messenger and how was one to understand the trinity. It was concluded at this council that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, 'were distinct from one another but were equal in their eternity and power' (Doniger, 1999, p.217). Hence, the belief set out by the council was clear- Jesus was of the same essence as God. However, even then there were still a group of people who could not accept this and believed that Jesus had a human form. They argued that 'how can Jesus be said to possess that identity with God that he must have to be our saviour, and yet be called our brother' (Doniger, 1999, p.217). This resulted in the third and very important council of Chalcedon in 451 which cemented the current belief of the Christian faith. Chalcedon declared that 'we all unanimously teach...One and the same son, our Lord Jesus, perfect in in deity and perfect in humanity...Two natures, without being mixed, transmuted, divided, or separated' (Van Voorst, 2015, p. 282). We can infer from these events that the common belief throughout these councils was that the Jesus was not a mere human but possessed some abilities of God; this belief is also shared amongst the Protestants who believe in the two natures of Jesus.

By comparing this to the beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa regarding the messenger is that he believed that the Prophet Muḥammad was created from the light of Allāh; in the previous chapter it is mentioned that Ahmed Riḍa quotes a narration in his monologue *Salat al Safa fi Nur al Mustafa* written in 1911 that:

Allāh created the light of your prophet from his light before he created all things ... when Allah intended to create the creation, he divided the light into four parts. From the first part He created the pen, from the second the Tablet, from the third the Throne, and then divided the fourth part into four subdivisions. From the first he created the Throne, from the second the Kursi of Allah, from the third the rest of the angels. He then divided the fourth into four parts. (Khan, 1911, p.33)

We can ascertain that Ahmed Riḍa believed that from the Prophet, the light of the Throne, Kursi, bearers of the Throne, the heavens, the earth, paradise and hell are were created. It is quite evident that this belief resembles the ancient Christian understanding that everything stemmed from Jesus as mentioned earlier; thus both groups believe that their leaders were of inhuman nature due to the ability to create other forms of creation.

Moreover, this belief is further pursued and defined, both groups believed each Jesus and Muḥammad were from the essence of God. The Council of Constantinople which set out the understanding of the Trinity, that all three entities, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, are in fact one and thus the Son (Jesus) being part of the Father (God); in comparison, Ahmed Riḍa mentions in a number of his written work that he believes that the light of Muhammad stems from Allāh, he states that Muhammad is from the very essence of Allāh (Khan, 1911).

Thus, both shared the beliefs that the central figures of their respective religions were inhuman and were from the essence of God.

3.2 Second resemblance - Celebration of the Prophets birthday

The date of the birth of Jesus is something uncertain in the Christian religion and the celebration of the birthday was not from the early festivals celebrated in Christianity (Doniger, 1999). However, the 25th of December has been taken as the day that many of the Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus. This is the day that Roman Catholics and Protestants specify to celebrate the birth of Jesus whereas some celebrate it on the 6th of January. It was in 350 A.D that *Pope Julius I* decreed *December 25* as the official Christian celebration day for the birth of Jesus and therefore Christmas, which in fact in old English was known to be *Cristes Maeses* meaning the mass of Christ or the feast of Christ; it was declared in the 4th century to be on the 25th of December. Reverend Jason Curry (2017) mentions that Christmas is a time of reverence for Jesus and one must understand the importance of the birth of Jesus as he was the saviour of the world. This point is echoed somewhat by Cruz (1984, p.160), where she highlights this fact and mentions that ‘countless statues of the child Christ are venerated at Christmas’. One can deduce and ascertain from the above that the innovation of the celebration was done as a form of veneration and a way of revering Jesus. Overman (2010) also alludes to the importance of reverence of Jesus as an aspect of Christian faith.

This resembles the celebration of the birthday of Muḥammad by the followers of Ahmed Riḍa. Similar to the Christian religion, the birthday of Muḥammad was not something celebrated initially and was innovated into the religion; it was not until the fourth century that this practice emerged and the first few generations did not celebrate the birthday of the prophet. It was first seen in the Fatimid dynasty and the celebration of the Birthday filtered its way into the different sects of the Ṣufiyyah.¹¹ Some historians declared that the celebration of the prophet as an un-Islāmic celebration (Zaheer, 2011). However, Ahmed Riḍa and his followers saw it otherwise, Deedar Ali, a khalifa of Ahmed Riḍa, mentions that on the birthday one should ‘apply scents and oils on oneself...distribute sweets [and] to show happiness’ (Na’imi, 2012, p. 271). Ahmed Riḍa mentioned that the day of the birth of the messenger is a day to rejoice and when the birthday is mentioned one should stand out of respect and

¹¹ See chapter 4.

reverence to the messenger. Comparable to the Christians who celebrate the birthday of Jesus and believe that day changed the world and mankind, it is the understanding of the Şufiyyah of Islām, that day was not just the birth of Muḥammad but as Katz (2010, p.141) states was an ‘earthly manifestation of a cosmic principle, the light of Muhammad’. This can be further emphasised by Kaptein’s (1993, p.71) point stating that the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet was inspired by ‘love for the Prophet and reverence for him’. Furthermore, Lapidus (2014, p.120) mentions that ‘reverence for the prophet is expressed by standing or praying or praying in ceremonies to express defence and awe’.

The similarity is apparent, that both the Christians and the Bareilvi’s believe by celebrating the prophet’s birthday, they are venerating and showing their love for their leaders. Also, it is clearly visible that the early generations in both Christian and Islamic history did not celebrate the Prophets birthday - this event was established much later on.

3.3 Third resemblance - Saint Veneration

The Roman Catholics believe that God is the creator but there is an immeasurable distance between the creator and creation and thus they believe that they need to be interceded for (Procter, 1905). They further believe that their loved ones who have passed away from this life are alive in heaven with God and believe that those who have passed away are in contact with them. This position that their loved ones are in, inspires them to call upon them with the understanding that they can intercede or even pass on their call and requests to God. The doctrine of the ‘communion of saints’ explains this belief and is based on three main principles:

1. The creatures of God can appeal to God for each other and that God will listen to the fraternal prayer
2. That the saints in heaven can hear us when we pray
3. That God listen to and answers the prayers of the saints.

Furthermore, it is believed that the saint is not just an individual who lived a pious life or had a holy death but that he also possesses supernatural powers (Klaniczay, 2014). Bennett (2012, p.82) mentions that in Christian theology a saint is a person who is known to have joined God in heaven and this can ‘be only demonstrated through the exercise of super natural power’. Moreover, Wasyliw (2008) states that from their supernatural ability is the ability to cure the sick and the grant their prayers. Brown (2014) also expounds on this belief and mentions its rise in Christianity. In contrast, there are some who see the invocation of saints as an action having no foundation in the bible (Robinson, 1815). It is generally the Protestants who speak against the invoking of the saints; from those who spoke against this action was John Calvin who wrote *Treatise on Relics* (1854) where he wrote about his understanding of the concept and where it stemmed from. However, many of those who accept the idea of saint revering, argue that they are not actually worshipping the saints which is

vehemently rejected by the Protestants who argue that the very calling on the saints is a way of worshipping them, they further argue that the worship should be solely for God and that is from the teaching of the Bible.

Just as there is a debate about the revering of saints within the sects of Christianity, there is a significant on-going debate present within the sects of Islām about the position of saints within Islām. There are those who reject and oppose this form of worship just as the Protestants do - ibn Taymiyyah is an example of those individuals who has written numerous books debating the issue; he enlightens and answered many misunderstandings of those who propagated this concept. Muḥammad ibn `Abdil Wahhab also campaigned against saint worshipping; his book *Kitāb at Tawhīd* argues that there is no proof from the Qur'an, in fact the you find the contrary that Allāh scorns those who fall into this type of worship and states that those who have passed away cannot hear you.¹²

From those who propagated the veneration of saints in Islām was Ahmed Riḍa and was from the foremost in calling to this. He states in his *Fatāwa ar Riḍwiyyah* that “it is permissible to seek aid from the pious and call upon them and use the pious as a way to get closer to Allāh and this is a lawful matter and a desired thing” (Khan, 2011, p. 300). He further believed that these saints possessed supernatural powers, this is evident in his statement in *Hadāiq Bakhshish* when he calls upon `Abdul Qādir Jilāni, ‘O my helper! You give life and death’ (Khan, 1907, p.57). In addition to this, he states in the same book ‘O Abdul Qādir, O one can bless, one who generously gives without asking... O Abdul Qādir, fulfil our desires’ (Khan, 1907, p. 58). There are many examples and quotations of Ahmed Riḍa regarding the invocations and super natural powers of Saints.¹³

We can establish that there is a clear resemblance between the belief of Ahmed Riḍa with regards to saints and a certain sect of Christianity and not Christianity as a whole; the Catholics and Ahmed Riḍa both believe that saints can be called upon as intermediaries to God, they believe that saints can intercede for them and aid them in their affairs in addition to God; furthermore they believe that the saints possess supernatural powers that can in turn aid them; hence this illustrates the clear resemblance between Catholicism and Barelvi'ism with regards to invocation of saints.

3.4 Fourth resemblance are omnipresent: - The belief that Jesus and Muḥammad

The belief that Jesus is present at all times (the omnipresence of Jesus) is something the Christians strongly believe in; Sproul (1992, p.243) mentions “Jesus human nature

¹² See *Fath al Majeed*, explanation of *Kitab at Tawheed*, chapter 16

¹³ See section 2.4.4, the belief with regards to saints especially Abdul Qādir Jilāni

is localized in heaven. His divine nature is omnipresent". They believe that even though the body and his blood are in heaven "they are spiritually made present by Jesus omnipresent divine nature" (Sproul, 1992, p.243). Rhodes (2006) mentions some of the different attributes of Jesus including omnipresence; the omnipresence of Jesus is something that the Christians do not have an agreed understanding on. Some believe that Jesus in his human form is omnipresent, as Barth, Bromiley and Torrance (2004, p.488) mention, 'they asserted the omnipresence of the humanity of Jesus'. While others assert that he is omnipresent in his divine nature only, as Calvin mentions 'that Christ's body and blood remain in heaven, they are spiritually made present to us by Jesus' divine nature' (Sproul, 1992, p.243). This point was echoed by Heide (2009, p.234) 'the doctrine of God's omnipresence does not apply to Jesus during his earthly ministry as finite being'. Although the Christians within themselves differ on which part of Jesus is divine, his human nature or his divine nature, they, nevertheless, assert that he has the ability to be omnipresent.

As for Ahmed Riḍa, then he was very clear on the omnipresence of Muḥammad. He states that 'there is no place and there is no time in which the Messenger of Allāh is not present' (Naeemi, 2012, p.103). One of the disciples of Ahmed Riḍa said 'it is not improbable that the Messenger of Allāh be present simultaneously at various innumerable places, with his physical existence' (Khan, 1911, p.103). This is commonly referred to as the prophet being haazir (omnipresent) and naazir (all-seeing.) Just as the Christians differ within themselves, the Muslims too differ and the omnipresence of Prophet Muḥammad is something that is intensely debated, especially between the Ahl ul Ḥadīth and Barelvi's.

Thus, the omnipresence of the Jesus and Muḥammad is another belief that Christianity and Barelvi'ism share in common

3.5 Fifth resemblance - Veneration of pictures, images and possessions of the saints

From that which stems from one of the previous similarities is the revering of pictures or images of saints. The issue regarding the relics of the saints has been discussed and debated in the Christian religion during the Council of Trent, which was held between 1545 and 1563; it summarised the doctrines with regards to the relics of saints:

The holy bodies of holy martyrs and of others now living with Christ and which are by Him to be raised to eternal life and to be glorified are to be venerated...affirm that veneration and honour are due to the relics of the saints, or that these and other sacred monuments are uselessly honoured by the faithful and that the places dedicated to the memories of the saints are

in vain visited with the view of obtaining their aid, are wholly to be condemned, as the Church has already long since condemned, and also now condemns them (Buckley, 1852, p.214).

However, the Roman Catholics do not agree with this and believe that ‘miracles’ and ‘marvels’ are present with in relics (Thurston, 1911). Within the same council, it was argued that one must accept the miracles that the relics have provided some men with, “the blind and cripples are restored to health, the dead recalled to life, and devils expelled from the bodies of men” (Thurston, 1911, para. 3) and thus it was decreed, once the council was concluded, that relics, saints and images should be venerated. Procter (1905) mentions that the Catholic church teaches that the relics of the saints must be venerated. The understanding is that if the saint is from the pious and is venerated than anything that belonged to the saint i.e a handkerchief or an apron (as long as it has a link to the saint) must also be venerated and respected. This belief is normally found within Catholicism; Procter (1905) argues that they do not worship these relics of the saints but use it as a way to get closer to God. If they see the image of the saint they hasten to remember their lord, if they do not have anything to remind them then their eyes need to be fixated on something that will cause the heart to remember their Lord. This is once again not accepted by the Protestants, because they do not believe in calling on the saints, nor do they accept the veneration of the possessions and images of the saints. It is clear that within Catholicism, that although they do not accept the accusation that they are worshipping these saints and relics, one must understand that by revering and venerating these saints will only lead to the worshipping of other than God as the Protestants believe that this action must be done for God alone; this very belief matches that of the Ahl ul Ḥadīth sect of Islām and thus they too are against the Bareilvi’s who try to ascertain the importance of relics and images.

Ahmed Riḍa asserts in *Badr ul Anwar fi Adab al-Athar* (1913, p.133) that ‘the relics of the saints, righteous men and scholars should be exalted, and blessings [should] be attained from them’ He further states in *Majmu’ ar Risail* (1907, p.134) that ‘one should kiss these relics, for it is the tradition of lovers’ Ahmed Riḍa mentions in *Badr ul Anwar fi Adab al-Athar* that ‘the scholars of the religion seek intercession by these images for removal of the ailment and for fulfilment of the needs’ and that ‘they sought help from them in averting diseases and achieving their objectives. They obtain from them great blessings and benefits’ (Khan, 1913, p.134). Similar to the Catholics, it is evident that he too believed in the hidden blessings within relics and that one should use them to attain benefits for themselves. However, Zaheer (2011) and others such as Muḥammad ibn `Abdil Wahhab in his book *Kitāb at-Tawhīd* argue, just as the Protestants argue, that this was the very same action of the polytheists of

the Arab peninsula, they used to venerate their idols and argue that it was a way of getting close to Allāh. It is said that Allāh spoke about these people in the Qur'an

Surely the religion is for Allāh only. And those who take close friends and helpers besides Him and say 'we worship them only that they may bring us closer to Allāh' verily Allāh will judge between them concerning that wherein they differ, truly Allāh does not guide the one who is a liar and disbeliever.
(39:3)

It is clear that there is a strong resemblance between the Roman Catholics and Barelvi'ism with regards to the veneration of saints and their relics.

3.6 Sixth resemblance -Building and decorating over graves

Stemming from the belief that one must venerate the saints, is the building and decorating over the graves. Viola and Barna (2010) mentions 'the bodies of the holy martyrs resided here, Christian burial places came to be viewed as holy places, the Christians started to build small monuments over these spaces- especially over the graves of famous saints' (p.16). The Christians would even go to the extent of building churches over the 'graves of the saints in holy awe' (Kennedy, 2011, p.88). This point was further emphasized by Mgaloblishvili (2014), where she mentions that prior to the 5th century they only used to build over the graves of the martyrs and post 5th century they would they would commemorate the dead by chanting psalms and sermons.

As for the lighting of candles at the tombs of the dead, then this something that the Christians used to do honour the dead; Flaherty (2015) mentions 'from the earliest of times of the church, lamps were lit at the tombs of the dead' (Chapter: Candles) he goes onto mention that 'many churches give people the opportunity to light candles before a shrine' (Chapter: Candles). The main reason for this was to honour the saint and secondly it was a sign of prayer, so as long as the candle remains lit then that saint will continue to pray for that person.

When compared to the understanding of Ahmed Riḍa with regards to building and decorating the graves of the deceased, then once again we see a resemblance to Catholicism. Ahmed Riḍa mentions 'building tombs and similar structures is necessary such that the blessed graves are distinguished from the common graves [so] people magnify them' (Khan, 2013, p.117). His belief is also mentioned by Ahmedyaar Naeemi (2012), that it is allowed to build over the graves of righteous people as long as the intent is to venerate and honour the righteous people. With regards to lighting candles then Ahmed Riḍa was very clear that it was something allowed and praiseworthy, it is mentioned in his *Fatāwa Ridwiyyah* that 'it is

permissible to light up candles in honour of the graves so that the people know that the grave belongs to some righteous one and can receive blessing from it' (vol. 4, p.144). The Barelvi's have the same reasoning as the reasoning of the Christians as Naeemi (2012) states that if there is a grave of a saint, then to respect and honour him and to publicise that it belongs to a saint, one should light candles and build over it so that the layman may benefit and take blessings from it.

So both the Catholics and the Barelvi's sought to build over tombs and the light candles at the graves to venerate the dead and to seek blessings from it and thus another similarity has been established.

3.7 Seventh resemblance – the belief that God came down in the form of the Prophet Muḥammad and Jesus.

Another major belief of the Christians is that God came to Earth in the form of a man.

Some of the Christians believe that God out of his love and mercy came to Earth as he could not bear to see his creation going to the Hellfire. The bible teaches the following belief that God himself came down from heaven, the bible states

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man. (2 Phil, 2:5-11 New American Standard Bible)

In addition, the Nicene-Constantinople creed states

We believe in One God, Jesus Christ, the only son of God, eternally begotten of the father, God from God, begotten, not made, one in being with the father. Through him all things were made. For us men and our salvation he came down from heaven. (Ball, 2003, p. 149)

This belief is very similar to what the Barelvi's believe, it is claimed by Zaheer (2011) that they believe that Allah who was on the throne who came down in the form of Muḥammad. However, having mentioned this, there is no evidence from the primary sources that suggests this in any way, and further to this Zaheer (2011) does not bring a source for this claim adding to its weakness.

3.8 Eighth resemblance - Superstition

In the first few centuries of both Christianity and Islām, superstition is something that was not known to be part of the religion. However, the introduction of new sects into the two religions saw the emergence of magic and superstition. Augustine of Hippo was from the forefront of those who ‘forcefully reiterated’ that superstition in Christianity stemmed from Roman and other pagan cults point (Bailey, 2007). There are many superstitions that the Christians follow; an example of this is the forbiddance of walking under a ladder, a well-known ancient superstition. The understanding was that the triangle represented the trinity and by walking through it showed not only disrespect to God but an alliance with the devil (Stapelberg, 2014). In addition to this is the well-known superstition of breaking a mirror in which will result in bad luck for seven years. Another common superstition within the Christian folk is regarding Monday, they believe that Monday is a hard day so much so that they do not do or take anything important on that day (Santayana, Wokeck & Coleman, 2011). This may not be a practice that originates from Christianity; however the point here is to allude to any practices related to the Christians that may have been present within India in the 19th century.

As for superstition within Bareilvi’ism it has already been mentioned that it is a sect full of superstitions for example the forbiddance of cutting cloth on a Monday otherwise it will result in that cloth either being burnt or stolen.

Having examined the resemblances between the beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa and Christianity, one can conclude there are striking resemblances between the two. As aforementioned, one finds it strange that Ahmed Riḍa would refute and even curse other Muslims but at the same time not say anything about the growing concern of the Christians, was the reason for this that he agreed with the various beliefs of the Christians? Or was he not aware of the Christian presence in North India?

The following chapter will discuss the different possibilities that could have led to the resemblances occurring.

CHAPTER 4 POSSIBLE REASONS FOR RESEMBLANCES

The similarities between Christianity and Barelvi'ism have been established in the previous chapter and one must ask the fundamental question of *why*? Why was Ahmed Riḍa so adamant to defend these specific beliefs? Was he directly affected by Christianity or was there a common factor or influence that affected both Christianity and Barelvi'ism? Perhaps it was the culture of India that affected Ahmed Riḍa? An important point one must consider here is that the aforementioned beliefs held by the Christians were the very beliefs that Ahmed Riḍa emphasised and defended. However, investigating the possible reasons for the similarities is slightly more difficult as there is nothing clear cut to determine that which affected Ahmed Riḍa. It should be known that the character of the sources which are used to determine Ahmed Riḍa's beliefs and practices, such as his *Fatāwa ar Riḍwiyyah* (1985) and his monologues, are written in a direct manner and can be left for interpretation, they give no clear indication of the influential factors surrounding him and neither do they give indication to the intentions of Ahmed Riḍa. Undoubtedly, Ahmed Riḍa is quite clear about his stances and his beliefs, however Ahmed Riḍa remained silent about that which influenced him and the reasons why he took certain positions. Thus, the possible reasons are only what one can infer from his direct answers and from the historical situation that surrounded him. Looking at the situation that surrounded Ahmed Riḍa a number of hypotheses can be drawn.

Firstly, was Ahmed Riḍa directly affected by Christianity? At first glance, one would believe that there is a definite connection between Christianity and Barelvi'ism considering the heavy influence of the British within India in the mid-19th century and considering that at one point of their rule, one of their aims was to spread the message of Christianity. This hypothesis will be discussed in detail, however if one finds that there is no clear connection between the two, a second hypothesis will be tested. The second hypothesis that will be explored is that it was the culture in India in the late 19th century that affected Ahmed Riḍa which led to his understanding of Islām resembling other religions in India during that time as one is a product of their education, society and religion (Mills, 2000). However if no direct connection is found a third hypothesis will be investigated, which is the possibility of there being a mutual, external factor that affected both Ahmed Riḍa and Christianity.

4.1 Was Ahmed Riḍa affected directly by Christianity or Christian Missionaries?

To begin to answer this question, one has to first determine whether there is a direct link between Ahmed Riḍa and any Christians. The following question can be asked to determine this; during his lifetime did he have any encounters with the Christian missionaries that were prevalent in the mid-19th century and was consequently he affected by them? The answers would lie within either the diaries of Christian missionaries or in the biographies of Ahmed Riḍa; however, neither source gives this

impression that both had met once in their lives and engaged in friendly discussions, research into the Urdu sources are also silent leading us to conclude that these encounters are non-existent. Zafar ud Din, his disciple, who has written the most comprehensive and popular biography of Ahmed Riḍa in the Urdu medium, has no mention of encounters with Christian Missionaries, this is neither mentioned in Sanyal's work. Looking at the work of Zaheer, one would be sure to find some reference to any Christian Missionaries if there were any encounters, however this source mentions nothing of the sort. It is strange, in fact, that Ahmed Riḍa gave importance to declaring his fellow Muslim citizens as disbelievers while never once engaging in polemics with the Christian missionaries, all the while knowing the impact the Christian missionaries were having on the people, Sharma (2005, p.36) quotes Maulana Fazl Haq Khairabadi who said 'the British had prepared a scheme for the conversion of India to Christianity'. Therefore, the Christian missionary effort was known to the religious leaders and a degree of worry was present amongst them. This point is strengthened by the fact that there was a surge in the effort of Catholic missions in North India in the late 19th century alongside the success of the Presbyterians (Webster, 2007). After the Mutiny one can see a resurgence in the efforts from the Christian Missionaries, this point was reinforced by Bellenoit (2007, p. 371) who mentioned that nearly '70% of the schools in Uttar Pradesh were mission run'. The presence of the many different groups of the missionaries also shows the intensity of their call to Christianity, The YMCA set up a branch in India also the Evangelicals set up the Universal Evangelical Alliance (UEA) to try to unify the Christian Missionaries¹⁴. An important point needs to be mentioned, Ahmed Riḍa seems much more lenient towards the Christian missionaries than he was towards the different sects in Islām during this time, was it that he did not see them as much of a threat or was it because that the missionaries held similar beliefs to him as opposed to the Deobandis and Wahhabis who were against shrine and saint worship? Webster (1976, p. 93) mentions that from that which the missionaries would preach would be that 'themselves they cannot satisfy God's demand of holiness and righteousness' a point that Ahmed Riḍa would also propagate.¹⁵

Furthermore, let one not forget the work being done by the Catholics also, building Churches in North India was a symbol of their call to Catholicism. An example of this was during the 1870's, a Roman Catholic cathedral was built in Uttar Pradesh, North West province, which was named St Joseph's Cathedral (Bloom & Blair, 2009), in fact in 1868 in Bareilly the Cathedral of Saint Alphonsus was built. One can deduce from such actions that to build a cathedral, a Catholic community must be large enough to have demanded such religious rights; in addition to this point it is evident that the Christian missionaries were propagating Christianity with all their efforts to gain believers to their religion and thus it would be fair to assume that the influential, religious leaders of the community such as Ahmed Riḍa would speak against such a threat, however, this is not found in anyway in the works of Ahmed Riḍa - in fact it

¹⁴ See Chapter 1

¹⁵ See section 1.4.3

seems his polemic works were only targeted to various Muslim groups particularly the Ahl ul Ḥadīth and Deobandis. The Deobandis and the Ahl ul Ḥadīth, however, had many polemic works attacking the creed of the Christians and were at the forefront of refuting them during the mid-19th century; examples of this have been mentioned in the first chapter. The fact that there was no opposition of any type against the Christian missionaries by Ahmed Riḍa raises doubts to the aims and objectives of his call to Islām; to further allude to this point we can infer from his fatāwa that not only was he adamant on making takfīr¹⁶ on certain individuals but he was against declaring Jihad against the British, he was an opponent to the Nadwa which was set up to unify the Muslims and improve the relations between the different sects of Islām that were emerging in India during his time. Robinson, a British Historian, mentions that Ahmed Riḍa gave fatāwa that were in support of the British rule in India and that this particular sect ‘adhered to the corruption of Islām such as saint worship and intercession at the tombs’ (Robinson, 2007, p.268) although other religious leaders in India were also in support of British rule and were against Jihad, no one had coupled this with fatāwa of takfīr and corrupted Islāmic beliefs. As one’s repeated actions can give an insight to one’s intentions, one can possibly infer that the intentions of Ahmed Riḍa was to make takfīr to separate the Muslims for a specific reason.

This can be answered by Ansaari’s work on Ṣufi saints and state power (1992); she states that the British used the pīrs to help them gain a stronghold amongst the Muslims. Ahmed Riḍa’s adherence and reverence of pīrs is quite clear from his own works in addition to the fact that he himself was the pir of `Abdul Halim who was the head of the Anjuman Qasim al-Ma’arif (Robinson, 2008). Alavi (1986, p. 31) mentions that ‘Barelvi Islām is closely tied to devotion of pīrs’ and that frequently ‘pīrs have local-level political power’. Perhaps, one can conclude that due to Ahmed Riḍa having ‘considerable influence with the masses’ (Robinson, 2008, p. 422) as a pir, he too was used by the British Government as an intermediary for the British to keep their position strong in India- his actions do allude to this fact.

This point is further strengthened by examining the relationship between Ahmed Riḍa and Ahmed Dahlan, a Mufti of the Shafi sect in Mecca. The British were having a hard time consolidating their position in India¹⁷, many Muslims were against the British rule which would inevitably lead to uprisings, thus again the British needed internal support of the Muslims to suppress the feelings of enmity. It is understood that the British had sought fatāwa from various religious leaders at the time, including Ahmad Dahlan, to declare India as Dar al-Islām and therefore avoid the Muslims rising up for Jihad, a compilation of these fatāwa can be found in Hunter’s dissertation, *The Indian Musalmans: Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen?* Ahmed Dahlan was very close to the British and Ahmed Riḍa had met him when he had made pilgrimage and was given `ijaaza from him. Ahmed Riḍa and others like Ahmed Dahlan gave fatāwa deeming India to be a land of Islām thus rejecting the

¹⁶ Takfir: pronouncement that someone is an unbeliever

¹⁷ See chapter 1

claim of Jihad against the British, Robinson (2008, p.422) clearly states that ‘his [Ahmed Riḍa] normal stance was one of support for government and supported throughout World War One, the Khilafat Movement and in 1921 organised a conference of anti-non-co-operation ulama at Bareilly’; having ‘ulama’ that would support the British government would no doubt subsequently lead to the British strengthening their position in India (Robinson, 2008). There is a possibility that the British had enticed Ahmed Riḍa to take such a stance to create divisions between the Muslims and thus weaken them allowing the British to consolidate their rule; this possibility can be substantiated not only by Ansaari’s work (1992) mentioned above, but also by Nasr (2001). Nasr (2001) states that the British believed that using intermediaries, such as those who were advocates of rural Islām, would strengthen their position in North-West India.

Dr Khalid Mahmood (2012) emphasises this point, he claims that from the main aims of the British was to dissolve Islām, but again required internal support of the Muslims to carry out this aim. He argues in his dissertation that they chose Ahmed Riḍa to nullify the very basis of Islām and mentions three points that leads one to believe that he was enticed by the British:

- The first being his infamous takfīr rulings on other sects, where he would viciously attack sects of Islām.

As explained above it is strange that Ahmed Riḍa’s focus was on various Muslim sects as opposed to the growing threat of the Christian missionaries. It has been established that this could have been due to his pro-British stance which is strengthened by this second point:

- He would attack any person who was against the British rule even if that person was upon the same beliefs as him.

A prime example of this was of Sayyid Habib who was the editor of a political magazine in Lahore. Although Sayyid Habib was upon the same creed of Ahmed Riḍa, once he had spoken against the British rule stating that it had intentions to split the nation of the Prophet Muḥammad, very soon after this, Ahmed Riḍa spoke against his own ally (Mahmood, 2012). This argument can be substantiated by the ‘divide and conquer rule’ (Stoessinger, 2010; Burke & Quraishi, 1995) initiative which sought to create divisions among the Indian people in order to continue ruling; it is a possibility that Ahmed Riḍa was used as a tool for this initiative. Interestingly, many ‘ulama’ of Islām were persecuted and imprisoned by the British yet Ahmed Riḍa and his father were never persecuted by the British- in fact they had good relations with them (Mahmood, 2012).

As for the third point:

- Ahmed Riḍa put together a version of Islām that would shake the very core of Islām, a mixture of Sunni Islām which resembled Christianity in areas and Shi`ism.

He propagated making supplication to not only Ali but up to the eleventh Imam of the Shi`a, he said in *Malfuzaat* (1932, p. 118) ‘The order of the helpers of the people (ghawth) and those who are called for help begins with Ali, ending at Hasan al-Askari, the eleventh Imam of the Shi`a’. Ahmed Riḍa use to teach the people a well-known shi`i dua (supplication) known as Dua Ṣaifi which calls upon Ali, call Ali for help who is the manifestation of wonders; you will find him a helper to you at the calamities’ (Zaheer, 2011, p. 20). These, along with other so called corrupted core beliefs mentioned in the second chapter, were taught to the uneducated lay man; the general folk within his community could not read nor differentiate between what was from authentic sources and what was not, Robinson (2008, p.422) states that although he was very influential to the masses, he was not ‘favoured by the educated Muslims’ this would put Muslims in disarray and hence weaken Islām and thereby strengthen the position of the British according to Mahmood (2012). It is interesting to note here that some would regard the Qādiriyyah, the Ṣufi tariqa that Ahmed Riḍa was on, to have shi`i origins, as Kumar (2008) mentions

The oldest is the Qadiriya, founded about 1100A.D by Abdul Qadir Jilani, the pir Dastgir whose shrine is in Baghdad, a descendant of Ali... and while it appears, certainly on one hand, that the order is, historically, a shia development on the other hand it is undoubtedly connected with Ṣufism. (Kumar, 2008, p. 334)

The idea of Ahmed Riḍa being utilised by the British government as a way of consolidating their power is strengthened by the aforementioned arguments, one can begin to form a picture of the intentions and influences that had encompassed Ahmed Riḍa – perhaps it is plausible that the British had enticed him to propagate such a form of Islām.

Upon reflection one may find that these arguments are more coincidental than clear cut proofs. Despite one not finding any work of polemical nature against the Christians, which adds doubt about his intention, no way substantiates the claim that he was affected by the Christian missionaries. There is a possibility that Ahmed Riḍa underestimated the Christian movement and believed that there was no danger from the Christians. The cathedrals that were built in the North West province once again alludes to the fact that Christianity was present in the area of Ahmed Riḍa yet this does not necessitate that he was affected by Christians, the two are separate issues. As

for the arguments put forward by Mahmood (2012); the first point which mentions that Ahmed Riḍa made takfīr on many different sects that attached itself to Islām because of his pro-British stance, this point would be stronger if a link between Ahmed Riḍa and the British was confirmed, however as long as the link is a possibility one cannot make a connection between the two. Also his takfīr on certain groups could have been based on what he believed opposed the correct Islāmic tradition (see chapter on his beliefs). The second point mentioned by Mahmood (2012) was that Ahmed Riḍa would attack anyone who spoke against the British rule even if the person had the same belief as him; this point does suggest that Ahmed Riḍa had a pro-British stance and it is strengthened by the works of other historians (Robinson, 2008). As for the third point mentioned by Mahmood (2012), was that Ahmed Riḍa put together a version of Sunni Islām that resembled Shi'ism and Christianity to weaken Islām, one can definitely see the similarities between Christianity and Shi'ism in the Islām that was practised by Ahmed Riḍa, nonetheless one is not able to find a direct effect of Christianity on Ahmed Riḍa. Tangible evidence of such claims such as diary entries praising the Christian missionaries would substantiate such assertions, however one does not find such and the closest type of evidence to his personal opinions are his fatāwa and thus these can be used to make inferences.

Ansari (1992) and Nasr (2011) do bring an interesting point, the British needed help to consolidate their position and thus having recognised the influence of the pīrs would use them to help them gain an upper hand with rural folk. A question arises; can there be a link between Christianity and Ahmed Riḍa through this relationship with the British? It is possible – it has already been ascertained that one of the major thoughts of the British about India was a vision of major transformation¹⁸ and to change the religion of India to Christianity; this intention was manifested in the establishment of Church schools throughout India. Although, this intention was changed in the reorganising phase after the 1857 mutiny, there were some who still had the same ideology instilled in them, it has already been stated that the missionaries received support from the government and the government believed that with an increase of Christian population it would increase stability in the country.¹⁹ Is it plausible to argue that due to the British using pīrs to spread their religion lead to Ahmed Riḍa propagating a version of Islām that resembled the religion of the British? It is possible however with one severe weakness which leads to the argument to be near impossible to establish, the weakness in the claim is that one will need to uncover evidence of personal meetings between the British Government and Ahmed Riḍa to prove that he was used by British, however no substantial evidence has been found to date suggesting any such encounters. Thus to reiterate, although the manipulation of the pīr's by the British to consolidate power has been ascertained, one cannot not directly make connection between Ahmed Riḍa, who was also a pīr, and the British except with conjecture.

¹⁸ See section 1.1.3

¹⁹ *ibid*

Therefore the hypothesis that Ahmed Riḍa was directly affected by Christianity has proven to be weak. One may find in the future proof of the missing link between Ahmed Riḍa and the Christians however at this point one has to concede that this hypothesis is weak. One should also consider that Ahmed Riḍa was practising a form of Islām that he believed was Islāmic, this point is strengthened by the fact that he has based some of his fatāwa on certain Prophetic narrations, whether the narrations are authentic or not is a separate issue that needs to be fully researched. Therefore, to claim that he was affected directly by the Christians or by the government is weak however it is more likely that the influence of the society and politics may have had an impact on what he what his version of Islām. As aforementioned, Christianity was still apparent in the area Ahmed Riḍa resided in with a cathedral built in Bareilly in the late 19th century, it has been mentioned that there would have to be a large number of Catholics in that area for a Cathedral to be built. Therefore, this leads to a very important question, was the prevalence of Christianity in Bareilly the reason that lead Ahmed Riḍa to hold certain beliefs that resembled Christianity? Was Ahmed Riḍa impressed by what he saw from the Christian practises this leads on to the second hypothesis: Did Ahmed Riḍa absorb in the different cultures around him and thus was indirectly influenced by Christianity and it was this that led his form of Islām to resemble Christianity. This hypothesis will be investigated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5 EFFECT OF CULTURE

In the century that was known as the century of renaissance of India, there were many different cultures and religions; the three prominent religions were Islām, Christianity and Hinduism. It has been mentioned previously that one is a product of their society and the effect of one's environment is undeniable, thus the effect of culture in general that had surrounded Ahmed Riḍa will be examined.

The impact of Hinduism on Islām has been discussed and explored by Mohsin Madani in his book *Impact of Hindu Culture on Muslims* (1993); he cites a number of examples of the resemblances between the Muslims and Hindus of India. Some of the examples are very interesting as they resemble some of the beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa; an example of this is the Hindu practice of Teeja and the Fatihah in the Muslim tradition. The understanding is that after the death of a person, the third day is specified as a day of mourning. The Hindus collect the bones of the dead and immerse it in the river, as for the Muslims, they specify the third as a day of mourning by spreading flowers over the grave and reciting over the deceased (Madani, 1993). This was the view held by Ahmed Riḍa and his followers;²⁰ This is why some would go to the extent of saying that Ahmed Riḍa's beliefs were an Indian version of Islām (Asthana & Nirmal, 2009), as the resemblance between the two religions within India are evidently similar. In addition to this, many of the wedding rituals in the Sub-continent greatly resemble that of the Hindu culture, the applying of henna on the hands of the Bride and the throwing of fruit between the newly wed couples are all examples of this.

It is important to note that India was known to be land of 'myths and superstition' (Kumar, 2013, p. 190). Previously, it was mentioned how the Barelvis also hold many superstitious beliefs that are stated to have no basis in the religion of Islām (Modood & Meer, 2010), furthermore, to reiterate Alavi's (1986, p.30) point, 'Barelvis profess a more populist Islām, more infused with the superstition'. If one was to observe first-hand the culture of the rural areas of Pakistan, one realises the consequences of the Muslims and the Hindus living together, it is evident that the two religions residing together has caused an amalgamation between the two cultures to create a form of Islām that incorporates some form of Hindu culture

When attempting to explore the social activities and culture of the Christians in India in the mid-19th century, it has already been mentioned that Christianity was considerably widespread and cathedrals were built in the North-West Province, one can be sure that there was a large Christian community in the North West Frontier for these Cathedrals to be built considering the number of converts. Hence, it is possible that the religious activities and culture of the Christians in this region of India may have affected Ahmed Riḍa in some form or shape, just as Hinduism did.

²⁰ See Jaa' al Haq by Ahmed Yaar Naeemi, 1367 H, 1957 AD

Examining these religious activities of the Christians in the mid-19th century in India, two main practices come to mind, the celebration of Christmas and the tradition of tomb building in cemeteries.

Christmas in India was definitely celebrated in the 18th century, it is mentioned by Hurst (1992, p.579) that ‘the English residence in India do not forget the Christmas association of their mother country, but convert their Indian homes into scenes of festivity’, from this it is evident that there were obvious celebrations of Jesus’s birthday in India, therefore, just as Ahmed Riḍa could have absorbed the culture of the Hindus, there is a possibility that Ahmed Riḍa may have also been influenced by the celebration of Christmas and thus was motivated to celebrate the Prophets birthday.

Nevertheless, this possibility aside, one finds that the practise of the celebration of the Prophet Muḥammad’s Birthday was already present in Islām since the fourth century. Al Maqrīsi, a Muslim historian, mentions that it was not known to celebrate the Prophets birthday before it was innovated by the Fatimid dynasty²¹ (Schimmel, 1985; Katz, 2007). However, we do find that this particular origin of the celebrating the Prophets birthday had links to Christianity; one can derive from the statements of Al Maqrīsi and others like ibn Taymiyyah that it was during the Fatimid Dynasty in which the celebration of the Prophets’ birthday was innovated. Ibn Taymiyyah clearly mentions in *Iqtida Şirāt al Mustaqīm* (1998) that celebration of the Prophets birthday is no doubt from the emulation of the Christians - a point reiterated by Katz (2007). The celebration of the birthday of the Messenger was one of the many birthdays innovated by the Fatimid dynasty in the fourth century, they also brought about the celebration of Ali ibn Tālib, al Ḥasan ibn Ali, al Ḥusayn ibn Ali, Fāṭimah bint Ali and others. They were supposedly affected by the Christians and wanted to resemble them as mentioned by at-Tuwayjiree (2000). This point was also reiterated by a German Orientalist Karl Becker, who mentioned that there is no doubt that the innovation of the birthday of the Prophet was from the effect of Christianity on the fatimiyīn (al Fiqi, 1938). It should also be known that many of the scholars of Islām do not regard the Fatimid dynasty to be a Muslim one. Abu Ḥamid al Ghazālī, ibn Taymiyyah and ad Dhahabi were from those who declared them to be non-Muslim. Ibn Taymiyyah mentioned that the disbelief of the fatimiyīn is something agreed upon by the scholars of Islām (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2002), they were not even considered to be Muslim by some scholars of Islām and this celebration stemmed from them. The celebration of the Birthday filtered its way into the different sects of the Şufiyyah, the Şufiyyah of Islām took the celebration of the Prophets birthday as a way of revering the Messenger (Schimmel, 1985). It is evident that Ahmed Riḍa followed in the footsteps of many Şufi’s in the celebration of the Prophets birthday and believed that it was a way to venerate and respect the Messenger it seems that this was the reason why Ahmed Riḍa practiced it. Schimmel (1985) notes that this veneration is similar to that

²¹ For definition see section 3.2

of the logos in Christian theology; hence, the Christian influence had a long lasting effect on the beliefs of some of the Muslims, including that of Ahmed Riḍa.

Although works opposing the celebration of the Prophets birthday were widespread at this time, such as the works of Ibn Taymiyyah which argue that the origins of this practise lie in Christianity and not from Islām, one cannot find any written monologues, refutations or fatāwa of Ahmed Riḍa against the celebration of Christmas by the Christians; perhaps it was something that Ahmed Riḍa agreed with it, considering that he too celebrated the birthday of the Prophet. There is a possibility that Ahmed Riḍa was lenient towards the Christians because of this reason, they agreed with him more than the Deobandis and the Wahhabis agreed with him, and perhaps he was more sympathetic and accepting of their culture, and hence this was reason as to why he was more silent in refuting the Christians.

The second custom that was prevalent within Catholicism was that of tomb building or the building over of Graves. The North West of India (United Provinces) had many Christian cemeteries, tombs and chapels that were built for a number of reasons, some dating back to the 17th century (Blunt, 1911) an example of this is the Christian Cemetery in Uttar Pradesh (Basil, 1969). Ahmed Riḍa in the 19th century regarded this ritual highly and stated that ‘building tombs and similar structures is necessary such that the blessed are distinguished from the common grave and people magnify them’ (Zaheer, 2011, p.117) and we find that it was prevalent within the Christian culture in the 19th century in Uttar Pradesh, in fact it was a well-established practice as these cemeteries and chapels had been built in the 17th century, as aforementioned.

On the other hand, one may argue, that the building of tombs by the Christians was not as established as the ritual of tomb building by the Muslims themselves, a practice inherited by the first Muslim rulers of India in the 12th century; before this time, tomb building was non-existent as the Hindus would cremate their dead and primarily because Islām had forbidden this act (Ruggles, 2011; “Tombs in India”, 2014). It is argued that once Islām was introduced into the country the restriction of tomb eased away and the significance of tomb building increased, they were mainly built for royalty, nobles and high ranking Ṣufi sheikhs or pīrs (Mark, 2009; Asher, 1992). It appears that building of tombs and mausoleums was quite common amongst the Islāmic rulers within not only the Mughal dynasty in the early 16th century, but tombs can be dated back to the 14th century from the Tughluq dynasty, the tombs built by both dynasty’s had cultural influences from the Persia and Turkey (Asher, 1992). As this research paper seeks to examine the possible reasons for the resemblance between Barelvi’ism and Christianity, the history of tomb building within in Islām will be explored further to gain a better insight. Ruggles (2011) argues that

The most likely model for Muslim tombs in Syria and the eastern Mediterranean [including Turkey] were the centrally planned, square, round, and octagonal Roman mausolea and Byzantine tombs and martyria

(monuments marking the site of martyrdom, grave or relics of a Christian saint)...Because of the influx of Turkic peoples coming into Iran...[it] may have absorbed some of the Turkic practice of funeral ceremonies and covering tombs with tents. (Ruggles, 2011, p. 103)

It is clear from this that there is an association of early tomb building in India with that of Roman and Byzantine tombs. In addition, from the earliest of the monuments to be built in Islām was that in Jerusalem which is referred to as the Dome of the Rock. It was built in 638 during the reign of the Caliph `Abdul Malik; it was built as a sign of the arrival of Islām to Jerusalem (Gardner & Kleiner, 2016). It was designed in an octagon shape surprisingly similar to the shape and design of the San Vitale in Ravenna. Willey (2005, p.93) mentions this point and states that the Dome of the Rock ‘bears a close resemblance to some Byzantine churches such as San Vitale’. Kleiner (2016, p. 287) also mentioned ‘in all likelihood, a neighbouring Christian monument, Constantine’s Church of the Holy Sepulchre, a domed rotunda, inspired the Dome of the Rock designer’s’. Whether the design was a replication of the San Vitale or the Church of the Holy Sepulchre one can clearly see the effects of Christianity on the architecture of the Muslims.

In Catholicism, honouring and respecting heroes and family members was something which started very early. In the 2nd century the Christians began to build monuments over heroes and martyrs; one of the earliest of these monuments to be built was the chapel that was erected over the grave Saint Peter in Rome. Senn (2010) argues that the Roman pagans before the Christians built monuments over the graves of the dead however the Christians not only adopted this practice but surpassed the pagans and started to build Basilicas²² over the graves of their dead. Another of these monuments to be built was that of San Vitale in the old imperial capital of Ravenna. The monument was built during the reign of Justinian²³ in his attempt to restore the ‘grandeur of the early Christian Empire’ (Hollingsworth, 2016, p. 102).

Thus, the ritual of building over the graves of the deceased by some Muslims was in fact not an Islāmic practise as the Messenger prohibited such rituals²⁴; one can see it was common practice amongst the Christians, which most likely trickled into India. We do not find the building of structures over tombs in the early part of Islām, the earliest of these was built in the 10th century as mentioned by Kleiner (2016). Some may argue, however, that the earliest tomb in Islām was much earlier than the 10th century in fact some would argue that the Prophet was buried in a tomb. Many historians of Islām have stated that the Messenger was buried in the house of his wife Aisha under the instruction of Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr acted on what he heard the

²² an early Christian or medieval church

²³ **Justinian I (ca. 482-565) was Byzantine emperor from 527 to 565 AD (Stevenson, 1997, p.18)**

²⁴ An example of this is mentioned in Sahih al Muslim hadith number 2289

Messenger say, which was that Allāh has not taken the life of a messenger except in the place where he would like the Messenger to be buried in as reported in at-Tirmidhi (1018), this is clearly something specific for the Messengers. If one was to examine the burial of the Prophet Muḥammad, he would find that the Messenger was buried in the house of His wife Aisha and that nothing was then built over him (Khan, 2011) and that he was buried in that place only because of the aforementioned hadeeth, one must also understand that the Messenger clearly prohibited the building over graves as mentioned in *Al Musnad of Abu y`ala Musili*, (3/67). As for the expansion of the Prophets mosque which occurred in first century, then the Mosque was not built over the grave of the Messenger but the expansion included the rooms of Aisha with the annoyance of the scholars of Medinah at that time.²⁵ This point is reiterated by the former Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, `Abdul Aziz bin Baz (1999)

Walid ibn Abdil Malik ordered for the expansion of the mosque and it to include the rooms of the residence of Aisha, however between the Prophets grave and mosque is a wall that removes the grave from being in the Masjid. (ibn Bāz, 1999, 5/388)

Also the Minister of Islāmic Affairs in Saudi Arabia, Saleh ibn `Abdil `Aziz Al- ash Sheikh mentions in his book at-Tamhīd fī Sharḥ Kitāb at-Tawhīd (2002)

Then came the expansion of the Mosque during the term of Walid ibn Abdil Malik and Umar ibn Abdil Aziz was the minister of Medinah during that period ... the rooms [of Aisha] were included in the expansion of the Mosque, however the east side [the side of the grave] is outside the prayer area and the walls prevent the grave of the Messenger being part of the Masjid. (Al Ash Sheikh, 2002, p.260)

Therefore, one can comprehend that there was nothing specifically built on the grave of the Messenger as Khan (2011, p.55) mentions ‘and there is no decorated structure or monument on his holy grave’. As for the green dome that was built on top of the Prophets grave, then this was done much later as Nordin and Yosuf (2008, p.21) mention “the first dome was built by Sultan Qalawun of Egypt in 678H (1279CE) and it was originally painted white, then blue, but it was in 1253H (1837CE) that Sultan `Abdul Hamid had the dome painted green”. One can clearly see that the understanding of the Ahmed Riḍa and his followers is to build over the graves to

²⁵ See al Uthaymeen, Majmu’ fatāwa question 292

venerate them, as Ahmadyaar Gujrati states in his book *Jaa' al Haq* (1982 , p.282) 'it is permissible to build buildings over the graves of scholars, awliya and righteous if the intent is to raise their honour and excellence' the Prophets grave was not built over as a means of honouring of him, no doubt any Muslim would regard the Messenger as a suitable candidate for a mausoleum to be built for him as he was just not a 'righteous' man, but the best of mankind, nevertheless, we can see that this was not the case. Thus, it is difficult to conclude that Ahmed Riḍa took the understanding of building over the graves from the grave of the Messenger especially since Ahmed Riḍa was recognised by his followers as a person of immense knowledge, he would have known that the Messenger was buried in the place of residence of Aisha and nothing was then subsequently built over him by his companions. It is more likely that Ahmed Riḍa was influenced by the many Şufi shrines that were present in India (Kumar, 2008), as opposed to being directly influenced by the practice of tomb building in India by the Christians. One of the most important shrines in India that belongs to a Şufi of the Qādiri order is that of Mian Mir. It is interesting to know that it was Mian Mir who laid the foundation stone of the Golden Temple in 1645 (Philippon, 2016); this point was echoed by Hasan (1998, p.34) 'Mian Mir was approached by Guru Arjan, the fifth Sikh guru to lay the foundation of the of the Golden temple. Such was the connection between the Şufi and early Sikh piety', this is another example of the indirect influence of the cultures on Muslims. Building of shrines and the building over the graves of pious people was a common practice of the Şufis and it has already been established that it was a common practice amongst the early Muslim rulers who had Persian and Turkish backgrounds, Upadhyay (2004, para. 4) states that 'the way Şufis' tombs emerged as a place of pilgrimage suggests that the missionary objective of the Islāmīc mystics was formulated mainly for conversion and to establish the Perso-Arabian cultural domination in South Asia'. Arguably, this point substantiates the link between Şufi tombs and Persian culture and ultimately its link to tomb building by the Roman and Byzantine Christians. There were a number of Şufi shrines in India during the lifetime of Ahmed Riḍa such as the tomb of Shaykh Abd-ur-Rahim `Abdul-Karim Abd-ur-Razak, 'he used to be Dara Shikoh's Qādiriyya Şufi tutor and his tomb is adorned with Persian architectural features' (Tombs in India, 2014); understanding this leads us to recognise why he was so adamant about defending them, he was an ardent follower of the Qādiriyyah order and building tombs and venerating saints was a very strong principle that they adhered to. It seems that due to this he was lenient towards other cultures and religions that resembled not only this belief and practice of his but others too; an interesting find to reinforce this point is the fact that although there were Shiva Temples in Bareilly (Chakravarti, 2002) in the late 19th century, one fails to find refutations of Ahmed Riḍa against these temples; even though he would regard the Hindus as polytheists stating that 'Krishan Kanayan was a disbeliever...present in hundreds of places at the same time' (Khan, 1932, p. 114). Ahmed Riḍa mentions this while trying to prove that the Awliya of Allāh (close friends of Allāh) have the ability to perform miracles. One finds it strange that Ahmed Riḍa would refer to Krishnan, a disbeliever, being able to perform miracles, unless he had absorbed the different

cultures that surrounded him. This may also allude to the reason as to why he never spoke about the Christian cemeteries and chapels that existed in India during his lifetime was because it resembled quite clearly the well-known Şufi practise of building of structures over graves.

It is quite clear that Ahmed Riḍa had the understanding that the calling upon other than Allāh was quite legitimate in fact he stated in a few of his fatāwa that one cannot get close to Allāh except through the pīrs. This was quite common in the Indian sub-continent especially within the Şufi practises, however we find that it was not only in the Indian sub-continent that this practise was prevalent but even in the Arab peninsula. From those who called to this practise was Ahmed Dahlan (As Sahasawani, 1975). As aforementioned Ahmed Dahlan was a mufti in Makkah during the Ottoman Empire and had beliefs similar to those held by Ahmed Riḍa. When Ahmed Riḍa travelled to hajj, he met with Ahmed Dahlan and received an `ijāza from him; so one can establish that the beliefs that Ahmed Riḍa used to propagate possibly originated from Ahmed Dahlan. From the beliefs that they both called to were: the veneration of the messenger to the status of having certain Godly powers or abilities, calling upon the dead to answer their problems, the belief that other than Allāh can benefit and harm and not differentiating between those who are alive and those or are dead (Sahasawani, 1975). These and other beliefs have been described by Historians such as Schimmel as 'folklore.' It seems that Ahmed Riḍa was affected by different traditions so much so that he believed that it was part of the religion; this along with his strong allegiance to the Qādiriyya pīrs is from the reasons why he was so adamant on defending what he was upon against the Wahhabis and Deobandis.

On the other hand, some may argue that Ahmed Riḍa was just continuing the way of those who preceded him from the Qādiriyyah sect. As aforementioned, these practises were found within the Şufiyyah centuries before Ahmed Riḍa's rise in North India. One can see the effect of Christianity on certain Islāmic sects namely the Şufiyyah, and the celebration of the Prophets birthday and the reverence of saints are clear examples of this, however to claim that Ahmed Riḍa celebrated the Prophets birthday and called on saints because he was directly affected by the Christians in India is difficult to corroborate, as one cannot find a direct link between the two.

However, there is one aspect of the version Islām that was practised by Ahmed Riḍa that appears to be effect of the culture around him. Ahmed Riḍa seemed to have absorbed the Christian and Hindu culture of superstition; one can be sure that he did not acquire the understanding of superstition from the Quran or the Messenger. An example of this is the superstition surrounding the days of the week- especially Monday. For some Christians the first of April is known to be unlucky as Cain was born on this day which happened to fall on a Monday, moreover, on Monday it is said that in the month of December Judas had betrayed Jesus (Cryer, 2016). This resembles the superstition of Ahmed Riḍa of not cutting cloth on Mondays as this would result in the cloth being burnt or stolen. It is interesting to know that the

Hindus also had their superstitious belief regarding Monday, which was that a baby born on Monday was known to be jealous (Moore, 1995).

Thus, we have Hinduism and Christianity both being spread and practiced in the North West Frontier and we have the doctrines of Ahmed Riḍa resembling the two. One can clearly see that superstition did not stem from Islām and the Messenger clearly prohibited superstition and explained how it was the custom of pre-Islāmic era, however what led Ahmed Riḍa to carry on this practise was that he had quite clearly been affected by the society around him.

Therefore, regarding the hypothesis that Ahmed Riḍa effected by culture, one struggles once again to find enough material to enforce this claim especially regarding the celebration of the Prophets birthday and ritual of building over tombs. These two practices have a long history in the Christian tradition but to be able to affirm that Ahmed Riḍa practised the two because of the Christian culture that surrounded him is difficult, as for superstition, there is a higher probability that the culture around him did affect him to certain extent as some have stated that his Islām was an Indian Islām. As a result, one can say that this hypothesis is partially true and thus it is imperative to explore the next hypothesis which is to investigate the effect of philosophy as an external factor that affected both Christianity and Islam and thus causing similarities between certain sects of Christianity and Islam. This hypothesis will be explores in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6 COMMON INFLUENCE

Thus far one has found it difficult to find a direct influence which led Ahmed Riḍa to hold certain beliefs which in turn has led his beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa to resemble those in Christianity. The previous two hypothesis examined have not given any concrete evidence of the reason why the resemblances exist; therefore, in this chapter we move on to the third hypothesis. In this chapter we explore the possibility of a common external factor that may have influenced both Christianity and Ahmed Riḍa which subsequently resulted in the two doctrines having similarities.

To determine a common influence between the two one needs to look at certain factors that may have affected the doctrines of Christianity and Barelvi'ism. Did the creeds that were stated in the last chapter exist in early Christianity or did these doctrines find their way into Christianity later on. If one finds that the beliefs entered Christianity later on, then one can examine the possible reasons for these changes. However, it should be stated that the focus of this study is Ahmed Riḍa and his beliefs and the following passage is only looking at the possibility of Christianity being affected by an external factor that could be compared to external influences on Ahmed Riḍa, whether it be direct or indirect.

History of Christian Doctrine

If one was to delve in to the history of Christianity one would find that many differences in doctrine occurred which led to disunity (Humphries, 2006). A number of councils were set up to nullify any of these disagreements. Beliefs regarding the trinity and Jesus were penned down at these councils, the earliest of these councils took place in Nicaea in 325 AC; within this council the humanity of Jesus was discussed and it was decided that Jesus was begotten not made and therefore he was not creature but in fact he was the creator.²⁶ Pre-Nicaea, however, in 90 CE, the Shepard of Hermas was considered to be a book of revelation by the church which contained twelve commandments, the first of them being believe that God is one and that He created all things and organized and out of what did not exist made all things and he contains all things but Alone is himself uncontained (al-Ashanti & Bowes, 2005, p. 20). The development of the Christian creed is apparent, the council of Nicaea penned down the belief that Jesus was the creator and the creation and the following council, which took place at Constantinople in 381, penned down the idea of the Trinity.

McKenzie (1995, p. 899) mentions 'that belief [the trinity], as so defined, was reached only in the 4th and 5th centuries and hence is not explicitly and formally a biblical belief'. The New Catholic Encyclopaedia, approved by the Catholic Church, clearly mentions that the definitive Trinitarian dogma was only reached in the latter part of the 4th century, it further alludes to an interesting point that 'it [the trinity] was the

²⁶ See Chapter 3 p.43

product of three centuries of doctrinal development’ (al-Ashanti & Bowes, 2005, p. 32). Dr Von Tishendorf (2000, p. 117) also states that ‘many passages undergone serious modification of meaning as to leave us in painful uncertainty as to what the Apostles had actually written’. Hence, Christianity possibly may have been affected by certain factors that led to the ‘development’ and ‘modification’ of these doctrines.

It is upon us to now to determine the factors that led to this change. An interesting argument was put forth by historian Will Durant, who has been quoted by many researchers, he asserts that ‘Christianity did not destroy paganism, it adopted it’ (Viola & Barna, 2008, p. 85; Kim, 2012, p. 88) and this very notion is arguably the core reason for the changes brought to Christianity.

One starts to grasp this very idea, Milman (1840, p. 424) remarks about the trinity ‘it could scarcely be avoided when the exquisite distinctness and subtlety of the Greek language were applied to religious opinions’, a point a view echoed by Jones (2014). The word Trinity is from the Latin word Trinitas which is the equivalent in the Greek language to Trias (Louth, 2013). The word Trias in the Greek language has been used by the Greek philosophers like Plato, this was first used by the Christians in the second century and ‘translated into Latin [Trinitas] by Tertullian about the year 200’ (Ware, 1832, p. 128). A surprising find was that Tertullian and other early Christian Fathers ‘were Platonists before they were Christians’ (Ware, 1832, p. 8). This argument substantiates what Milman (1840) states about the Greek language being applied to religious opinions.

Whether the concept of Trinity originating from Greek Paganism or not is something which has been discussed and debated for a long time and although as afore mentioned this research paper aims not to concentrate on the controversies surrounding this issue, one would like to highlight the argument that the Greek language and culture may have had a role to play in the appearance of certain doctrines within Christianity.

The effect of Roman pagan culture on the Christians living in Rome has been discussed extensively amongst historians; an example of their influence is by understanding the likely origin of the celebration of Christmas on the 25th of December. The 25th of December was the birthday of Sol²⁷ known to be a time rejoicing for the Romans; the Romans worshipped these idols and these same Romans were in charge of the councils that took place and defined Christianity (al-Ashanti & Bowes, 2005). There was a major effect of paganism on Christianity in the first two centuries as Hanson (2007 p. 22) mentioned ‘much of paganism after the first century or two, remained in and corrupted Christianity’; he further argues that Christianity ‘suffered in the most essential manner’. So a clear pattern has started to appear, which is that when Christian moved into the Greek paganist world instead of Christianity

²⁷ Sol, in Roman religion, name of two distinct sun gods at Rome. The original Sol, or Sol Indiges, had a shrine on the Quirinal, an annual sacrifice on August 9, and another shrine, together with Luna, the moon goddess. (White & Croce, 2014, chapter on Sol).

‘extirpating’ and destroying Greek paganism it ‘assimilated’ it, and Christianity has been suffering since (Hanson, 2007). Moving into the third century the changes kept coming, the worship of Jesus and then Mary, this was followed by the calling on saints as a way to get through to God (Hanson, 2007). One can begin to understand the effect of Roman paganism and their philosophies on the doctrines of Christianity.

However, in contrast one may say that there are Christians who believe that the origin of the Trinity lies in the Bible. They believe that even though the Bible never mentions the word Trinity but Trinitarianism was ‘a carefully developed Biblical teaching’ (Kelly, 2006, p. 5). Freeman (2008, p.41) also states that the Trinity was a ‘logical development’ of Christian doctrine. This point was echoed to a certain extent by Stravinskias (1994, p.77) ‘granted, it [the trinity] is not stated in the precise terms in which subsequent theology spoke of it and the word itself is not used, but that does not mean the concept is not taught’. Therefore, some Christians and certain academics assert that in fact the doctrine that is taught within Catholicism stems from the Bible and not Greek paganism. As aforementioned, the effects of philosophy on Christianity is an on-going academic battle between the two groups

However, questioning whether one can see the same effect on Barelvi’ism or on Islām in generally, it can be asked, did paganism and its philosophies effect Islām the same way it could have affected Christianity?

Ahmed Riḍa and Philosophy

Firstly, with regards to Ahmed Riḍa, one can clearly see that from a young age he studied Philosophy²⁸ and his father and main teacher, Naqi Ali Khan, also delved into the realms of Philosophy. Ahmed Riḍa wrote books on Philosophy (Sanyal, 1996) and was hailed as a great philosopher and a master of ancient and modern philosophy. We find that Ahmed Riḍa’s understanding of Philosophy resembled that of Ibn `Arabi and Jili²⁹ and one can assume that he was perhaps influenced by them, having had studied philosophy with his father.

Naqi Ali Khan held strongly onto certain beliefs regarding the Messenger and believed that the Messenger cannot be created again; it can be assumed that thus he believed that Allāh is not able to do everything because he cannot create another like the Messenger. He would firmly advocate this belief to the extent that he would debate those who opposed him (Sanyal, 2005). Examining the beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa, we can see the clear connection between the beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa and his father with regards to the Messenger and see that they both venerated the Prophet highly. This veneration is also well known in the mystical Islām, Şufism, and is especially well-known amongst those who delved into philosophy; it is referred to as al Haqiqa al Muḥammadiyah (the Reality of the Messenger) or Nur Al Muḥammady (the light of Muḥammad). The early Muslim mystic Sahl at Tustari was from the first to

²⁸ See Chapter 1

²⁹ See Chapter 2

mention what he believed was the understanding of the Light of Muḥammad. He believed that Adam was created from the light of Muḥammad (Schimmel, 1985). This understanding of the 'light of Muḥammad' by Tustari was taken by Ibn `Arabi and he further defined this notion; in Ibn `Arabi's lines of poetry he states that the throne, the footstool, the pen, the Tablet and Adam were all created from the 'light of Muḥammad' (Schimmel, 1985). This interpretation of Prophet Muḥammad's humanity was known by the Islāmic philosophers and it trickled through into the later generation of the Indian subcontinent; this can be seen by Shaykh Chand, a Bengali poet in the middle-ages, who exaggerated the position of the Messenger by saying that the seven heavens were created from the seven parts of the body of Muḥammad (Schimmel, 1985). Moreover, in the 17th century, the Kalhora Prince Sarfaraz Khan of Sind delved into the philosophical world and wrote poetry expressing his belief in the 'light of Muḥammad.' Even as late as the 19th century some of the Naqshabandis voiced the same notion where they believed that everything in the East and the West stemmed from the womb of the Prophet Muḥammad (Schimmel, 1985).

Thus, it can be gathered that philosophy played a pivotal role in the belief of some the Muslims in India. From those who were affected by doctrines of Ibn `Arabi was `Abdul Karim Jili, a well-known philosopher from Baghdad, he was a Ṣufi on the *tariqa* of the `Abdul Qadir Jilani (Qādiriyah.) It is interesting to know that from the philosophers to come to the shores of India was `Abdul Karim Jili himself (Leaman, 2015). One can ascertain that the first Qādiris of India were quite clearly affected by their main spiritual leader who was Jili, and those who take bay'ah are obliged to take everything from their spiritual leaders; thus philosophy entered the Qādiriyah of India. This is somewhat echoed by others who mention that those who were from the first to hold to the Qādiri order in India were also inclined to some of the doctrines of Ibn `Arabi, (Dalal, 2006); having this in mind, one must not forget Ahmed Riḍa's initiation into the Qādiriyah order. One can evidently see not only the indirect effect of philosophy on the beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa but the direct effect of philosophy as it was a subject that he studied under his father and thus one can begin to comprehend the origins of the beliefs held by him.

Islām and the effects of Philosophy

By researching the origin of philosophy in Islām one begins to understand the influence it has had on the emergence of certain beliefs that Ahmed Riḍa held such as Nur e Muḥammadiyyah and Waḥdatul wujūd. The 2nd century, in the Abyssid period, was a pivotal moment in the introduction of philosophy into the Muslim world. The first incident of philosophical influence on the Muslims was that of Ja`ad ibn Dirham. He was living in Haran, an area well known to be full of philosophers, he was affected by the philosophers until he made the statement that Allāh did not take Ibrahim as close friend and did not speak to Musa; this statement of his led him to be executed by the governor of Iraq, Khalid ibn `Abdillah al Qusari, as his claim was deemed to be one of disbelief (al-Uthaymeen, 2010). Later, Ma`amun al `Abāsy who was the Islāmic leader at that time, ordered for the translation of Greek and Roman books,

these books were of different topics ranging from mathematics to medicine. This point has been reiterated by both Muslims and non-Muslims; Brown and Flores (2010) mentions that

Falsafah of non-Muslim origin, owed its growth in Islām to the translation of Greek philosophy into Arabic...the Muslims took over the fertile crescent in the 7th century and Arabic became the official language of the empire. At this point most translations were still from Greek to Syriac, though translation from Greek to Arabic followed and, beginning in the 10th century, translations from Syriac into Arabic were made. (Brown and Flores, 2010, p.103)

Ḥunayn ibn Ishaq and his son and also `Abdullah ibn al Muqaffa were from the first to translate into Arabic. From those who began to study philosophy in the Arabic language was Sahl at Tustari, he was the first to bring about the notion of Nur al Muḥammady, it is also mentioned that he was the first to ascribe divinity to himself (Glassé & Smith, 2008, p. 393). Tustasri's thoughts and doctrines spread through the Muslim world and from those who took and "systematized" the work of Tustari was Ibn `Arabi (Taji-Farouki, 2007, p. 348). As a consequence of the work of Ibn `Arabi, many Muslims were affected and from the individuals who were affected was `Abdul Karim Jili and he was the first to call to that understanding in the Indian sub-continent, as aforementioned.

The question arises what beliefs did `Abdul Karim Jili actually bring to India. Jili's beliefs will be discussed as follows. Jili had a clear admiration for Plato and praises him in some of his works such as in *Insān al Kāmil* (1895, p.232), he states that 'I saw that he [Plato] filled the invisible universe with lights and joy, and I saw him on station that I did not see except to a few of the awliya'. A clear admiration can perhaps mean that he was affected by Plato and adopted some of his teachings; his statements within his book *al Insān al Kāmil* are rampant with philosophical ideologies and concepts, an example of this is *Waḥdatul wujūd* (Schimmel, 1985), he believed that there is a unity of man with God, or unity of creation with God, Jili states in *Insān al Kāmil* (1895, p.110) that 'God manifests Himself in His attributes to all other created beings'. Jili further adds to this in the same book that 'creation is like ice and Allāh is like water, which is the origin of ice and the ice is nothing but water in reality' (Jili, 1895, p.74). Comparing this to what Ahmed Riḍa says in *Malfuzaat* (1932, p.102) that 'its presence and that which is present are one', in other words he believed that Allāh exists and nothing else exists and thus there is a unity of creation and God. Jili (1895) also believed in the notion of *al Insān al kāmīl*, the perfect man, which has been mentioned above, that from the Messenger everything came into existence 'the perfect man is the axis on which the spheres of existence revolve from first to last' (Jili, 1895, p.105), he also said 'know that when Allāh ta'ala created the soul of Muḥammad from his essence, and the essence of the truth gathers two opposites, He created the higher angles from the attributed of beauty, light and

guidance of the soul of Muḥammad' (Jili, 1895, p.240). Here the beliefs of Jili are evident, he clearly believed in the notion of al Haqiqa al Muḥammadiyah, he venerated the Prophet as the Ṣufiyyah did and believed that other elements of the universe were created from him. This resembles the understanding of Ahmed Riḍa, who, in *Majmu'a ar Rasa'il* (1985), shows that he believed that not only was the prophet created from light but that the Throne, Kursi, bearers of the Throne, the heavens, the earth, paradise and hell are all from the light of the Prophet Muḥammad. Notably, Jili was also known to defend the Christians, an example of this can be found in his book *Al Insān al Kāmil* (1895, p. 164-165) where he states 'because in reality they [the Christian] were upon truth, as Haqq is the reality of Isa and the reality of his mother and the reality of the holy spirit, rather the reality of everything, and this is the meaning of 'Isa "they are Your slaves'. Jili believed that the Christians only mistake was that they restricted the 'reality' to Jesus and his mother whereas according to Jili the Christians should have accepted that everything was the reality.

Both Jili and Ahmed Riḍa were on the Tariqa of the Qādiriyyah and this is the fundamental link between the two; the Qādiriyyah held all of the above beliefs that Jili had bought to India.

Consequently, by comparing the beliefs of Jili with that of Naqi Ali Khan and his son Ahmed Riḍa, many similarities can be seen, they were both affected by the philosophy bought to India by Jili. Thus, one can ascertain that philosophy played a role in the emergence of some of the sects in Islām and that Ahmed Riḍa was undoubtedly affected by these philosophers and Philosophy in general. By comparing the introduction of Greek literature and language to the Arab-Muslim world to that of the introduction of Greek culture within Christianity, one can now begin to see a resemblance between the origins of some of the doctrines within Christianity and those within Islām. Although, it is not clear that Ahmed Riḍa was directly influenced by the doctrines of Christianity or by any Christians, it is evident that there is a possibility that both were affected by philosophy and Greek ideologies that led to some of the beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa to resemble Christianity. However, it has to be acknowledged that this point is only valid if the arguments suggesting that Greek philosophy affected Christianity are accurate.

We have now come to the end of examining the three hypotheses presented at the beginning of this research paper. It is upon one now to conclude and summarise whether any of the hypotheses can be proven; this will be discussed in the next and final chapter.

CONCLUSION

This research looked to explore a sect in Islām known as Bareilvi'ism, this denomination of Islām stemmed from the beliefs taught and advocated by Ahmed Riḍa who resided in the city of Bareilly, North-West India in the late 19th century. This research identified and acknowledged that there are resemblances between Bareilvi'ism and Christianity and investigates the possible reasons as to why these resemblances may have existed. This research studied the beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa by returning back to his own works and then examined the resemblances between the beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa and Christianity. One was able to identify eight similarities between the two - these resemblances were mentioned in detail in chapter 2.

Therefore, one can conclude that there are a number of resemblances between the two; however, the crucial area of this research was to explore the possible reasons as to why these resemblances may have existed. Three hypotheses were put forward; firstly, was Ahmed Riḍa affected by Christianity which was apparently growing in North-West India in the late 19th century? This hypothesis was supported by the fact that the Christian Missionary effort was renewed in the latter part of the 19th century especially in North India, the time when Ahmed Riḍa was vocal in his call. While the missionaries were exerting their effort to spread Christianity some Muslims converted to Christianity, this point is particularly significant in light of not finding any works of Ahmed Riḍa being polemical in nature against the spreading of Christianity. By exploring the works of Ahmed Riḍa, one was surprised at the lack of mention of the Christians even though their influence was growing with his region of influence. As for the literature dealing with the missionary effort in India, one found that it was replete with discussions and debates between the Christian Missionaries and Muslims; however there is no mention of Ahmed Riḍa. A debate with a significant figure in the Muslim world in the late 19th century such as Ahmed Riḍa would definitely be mentioned by the Missionaries, however his name is absent from the missionary literature. Perhaps there was a slight inclination to the Christian faith and perhaps it may be possible to argue that this is where the resemblance between the two stem from.

Having said this, if Ahmed Riḍa was to be affected by Christianity directly, one would need to affirm either dialogue between the two faiths or at the very least evidence of Ahmed Riḍa witnessing a church service or other public ritual of Christianity, this primary evidence then can be used to some extent to argue that Ahmed Riḍa was indeed affected by them; however due to the lack of such evidence we cannot ascertain that Ahmed Riḍa was affected by the Christians in anyway. Furthermore, as aforementioned the direct nature of the written works of Ahmed Riḍa gives us the understanding that Ahmed Riḍa was answering questions and therefore his answers would have to be direct. Thus, his written works gave no insight into any possible links with the Christians.

When exploring the claims by some, such as Mahmood (2012), who asserts that there is a link between Ahmed Rīḍa and the British government, would need to be scrutinized simply because of the nature of such statements being polemical. From research it was noted that the Christian mission was encouraged by the government, a point that Mahmood (2012) asserts, and thus the link between Ahmed Rīḍa and the Christians can be possibly seen in this way. However, once again the link between Ahmed Rīḍa and the British government in India can only be confirmed with a certain amount of conjecture as no meeting was ever mentioned by either party. Thus it can be concluded that the first hypothesis cannot be proved due the little concrete evidence available and the lack of substantiated claims.

As for the second hypothesis which looked to explore the possible effect of culture on the beliefs of Ahmed Rīḍa. Then once again, a number of points do allude to the fact that Ahmed Rīḍa may have embraced some of the culture that surrounded him, superstition being a prime example. As for the celebration of the Prophets birthday, one can confirm that this practice was present in India in the late 19th century and there is a possibility that Ahmed Rīḍa was aware of this Christian Practice and was consequently affected by it. Nonetheless one has to accept that this possibility is based upon assumption as opposed to clear cut evidence from a personal journal or diary. This assumption is made weaker by fact that there is strong possibility that he may not have taken this from the Christians in India but he may have been continuing the tradition of the Qādiriyyah. Therefore, one cannot find any concrete evidence that point to the fact that he was directly affected by Christianity nor any evidence that he was affected by the cultural practices of Christians in India but in fact he was continuing the ancient practices of Qādiriyyah, a sect in Ṣufi Islām that he was initiated into.

However, the concept of the celebration the Prophets birthday in Islām seems to have stemmed from the imitation of celebrating the birthday of Jesus in Christianity during the Fatimid dynasty. Therefore, one can state that the celebration of the Prophets birthday did stem from Christianity and it is possible that this is the reason one can see resemblances between Christianity and some sects in Islām but to state that Ahmed Rīḍa was affected by the Christians in North India can only be based on assumption. Likewise, the veneration of saints which is an ancient Catholic practice, there is no doubt the literature does suggest that Catholicism did increase in the latter part of the 19th century, however, similarly the veneration of saints is an ancient practice within the Ṣufi sects of Islām. Therefore it appears that Ahmed Rīḍa veneration of saints in the latter part of the 19th century coincided with the presence of Catholicism in North India and the literature at hand does not refer to any meetings between Ahmed Rīḍa and the Christians nor of Ahmed Rīḍa coming across any Christian practices in North-West India. However, on the other hand one is led to believe that culture had a part to play in the superstitious beliefs that Ahmed Rīḍa propagated, these superstitions resemble certain superstitions within the Christian and Hindu cultures which were prevalent in India in the late 19th century. Therefore, the

second hypothesis which looked at the possibility of culture affecting Ahmed Riḍa's beliefs can be argued to some extent especially regarding superstition, though the effect of culture on Ahmed Riḍa being the sole reason for his other beliefs is difficult to substantiate. Thus, this led to a third and final hypothesis, which looked at a mutual influence that had affected both Christianity and Ahmed Riḍa.

The third hypothesis looked at the possibility that Greek philosophy affected the beliefs in Christianity and it led Ahmed Riḍa to hold certain beliefs. To determine the validity of this hypothesis one has to explore the possible effects of Greek philosophy on both parties. As for Ahmed Riḍa, one can ascertain through the biographies written about his education, that he spent time learning about philosophy, therefore, the biographies of Ahmed Riḍa allude to the fact that he was a person who delved into philosophy and was well known for his knowledge of it. His own works suggest that he was affected by certain philosophers of Islām such as Jili. Jili brought a certain philosophical understanding of Islām to India and was from the leaders of the Qādariyyah ṣufi order; he was from the first to introduce the understanding of al Haqiqa al Muḥammadiyyah and Waḥdatul wujūd in India. It has been mentioned how Jili had been captivated by Greek philosophers such as Plato. Thus a clear link can be established between Ahmed Riḍa and philosophy. As for determining a link between Christianity and Greek philosophy, this matter requires much research which is beyond the scope of this research, this research aimed to determine the possible reasons for the similarities between the religious groups and to delve into such a topic would indeed be a research of its own.

Significance and future research

This study looked to explore a number of reasons that could have led to the emergence of a sect known as Bareilviyyah which rose in the late 19th century in North India. This research has been significant in quelling any claims that Ahmed Riḍa may have been affected by the British as much of what is mentioned is based on conjecture. Likewise the research has been important in looking at examples of the effect of culture upon Ahmed Riḍa and suggests that culture is an important factor in the emergence of sects in Islām and it will be interesting to look at different sects in Islām in India and to explore how much of a role culture plays in shaping these different sects knowing full well that India in the 19th century was a country of great culture. Furthermore, another significant find from this research is the role of philosophy had to play in the emergence of the beliefs of Ahmed Riḍa and it would be interesting to investigate how much effect philosophy had on the emergence of other sects in Islām especially in the 19th century.

Limitations

Due to the limited time frame available to complete this research I was only able to explore his main works which incorporated his main beliefs, there were other works

that could have included other vital principles that he lived by and therefore may have been pivotal in coming to a stronger conclusion.

Further to this, as aforementioned, the direct nature of Ahmed Riḍa's work made it difficult for one to establish the reason for the resemblances between his beliefs and those in Christianity. Ahmed Riḍa was only answering questions or clarifying specific matters in the works that were looked at in this research. Most of that which was looked at was around creedal matters pertaining to the creation of Prophet Muhammad and other related matters. I did not come across questions that were answered concerning the Christians, this could have been particularly helpful to enlighten us on his stance regarding them. Therefore, due to this limitation coming to a stronger conclusion was not possible. One should also mention that the silence of Ahmed Riḍa on certain aspects of Christianity and Hinduism, although could be interpreted as his affirmation of that practise, has to be penned down as a limitation, as silence does not necessitate his affirmation. Therefore, his silence limited the results of this research.

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