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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
نَحْمَدُهُ وَنُصَلِّي عَلَى رَسُولِهِ الْكَرِيمِ

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The Babi Religion, IV. THE CLAIMS OF BAHALLA.

Though as we have shown in a previous issue, the Babi religion has been divided and sub-divided into sects, the chief interest of the movement centres upon the claims of Bahalla, and it is these we intend to discuss in this article. The coming of Bahalla is considered to be the fulfilment of all the prophecies made by the prophets of God, as Bahalla himself says in one of his works: "It is he of whom Muhammad, the Messenger of God, spoke, and before him Jesus and before him Moses. It is the most right way which was hidden in the hearts of all the prophets and which was stored in the breasts of the chosen ones and which was written by the great pen in the tablets of your Lord, the king of heavens." Thus the first thing to be borne in mind about the dispensation of Bahalla is that he claims to have come in fulfilment of certain prophecies.

In the *Kitab-ul-Aqdas*, the chief writing of Bahalla, the different people are addressed as having their expectations fulfilled in the appearance of Bahalla. The Muhammadans are told that "the Merciful has come with clear arguments," (p. 100), and elsewhere it is said that Bahalla is the *Naba-i-Azeem* (the great news) or the Resurrection in the Quran. In the *Bahr-ul-Irfan*, a book written by one of the followers of Bahalla, it is expressly stated that

wherever the *Yaum-ul-qaydmat* or the Resurrection-day is mentioned in the Holy Quran, there the time of Bahaulla's appearance is meant. The same meaning is alleged to be conveyed by the word *sa'at* (the hour or judgment day) occurring in the Quran. With regard to the Muhammadan expectations of a Messenger in the latter days, this is the only claim advanced. Now before considering whether there is any proof for the claims so advanced, which we intend to do in a later article, it is necessary to see if the Muhammadan expectations are really such in the main as they are represented to be. In the first place, it is an undeniable fact that from the earliest days, no sect of the Muhammadans has ever entertained the belief that in the latter days the Merciful Himself would make his appearance. There is not a single prophecy in the Holy Quran or in any tradition of the Holy Prophet which has ever been interpreted by any Muhammadan to mean that God Himself would appear in flesh. In fact, the basic principles of Islam are opposed to such a belief, and nothing but sheer ignorance of the Islamic principles can make any body distort clear words of the Quran to make them yield a sense entirely opposed to that which they were intended to convey.

To understand what the Muhammadan expectations and Islamic prophecies with regard to the advent of a Messenger in the latter days are we need not go into details as the prophecies are well-known and they have been quoted in these pages more than once. There are many prophecies in the traditions but they are all based on the Holy Quran. Now the Quran establishes a parallelism between two dispensations, viz., the Mosaic dispensation and the Muhammadan dispensation, Moses being the founder of the former and the Holy Prophet Muhammad that of the latter. The Holy Prophet is likened to Moses in the chapter entitled *Al Muzammil* and elsewhere in the Holy Quran. But the parallelism between the two dispensations does not end here. There is a prophecy in the chapter entitled the Light which carries this parallelism to the successors of the two founders, as the Holy Quran says: "To those of you who believe and do righteous deeds Almighty God promises that He will raise from among them successors (to the Holy Prophet) as successors were raised among those who were before them," i.e., in the Mosaic dispensation. Now Christ was really the last successor of Moses and this promise

therefore implied that the last successor in the Muhammadan dispensation would be a man bearing resemblance to Jesus Christ in his teachings and spiritual powers and that he would be the Messiah of the Muhammadan dispensation as Jesus Christ was the Messiah of the Mosaic dispensation.

The Quranic prophecy referred to above gives us the essence of the Muhammadan prophecies with regard to the appearance of a Messenger in the latter days. In the more reliable traditions, the name of the Messiah is clearly mentioned and his advent is spoken of as the second advent of Jesus, son of Mary. But we should not take this too literally as the Holy Quran speaks of the death of Jesus, son of Mary, in the clearest words. Moreover, the promise with regard to the successors of the Holy Prophet as given in the Holy Quran clearly says that successors like the successors of Moses would be raised in the Muhammadan dispensation and not that the very successors of Moses would come back. The prophecy of the second advent of Jesus Christ must, therefore, be read in the same light as the prophecy of the second advent of Elijah in the Old Testament. In the traditions that Messenger is also mentioned under the name of the Mahdi, and there is also a tradition which removes all doubts by saying that there is no Mahdi but the Messiah, that is to say, one and the same Messenger shall bear both these names.

Bahau'lla did not claim that he was the Messiah or the Mahdi expected by the Muhammadans and therefore he cannot be said to have fulfilled the prophecies relating to the advent of such Messenger. And the claims that he actually put forward were not in accordance with the Muhammadan expectations or the prophecies of Islam. Thus though Bahau'lla addressed the Muhammadans and even won proselytes from among them and claimed to have come in fulfilment of Muhammadan expectations and prophecies, his claims are actually at variance not only with Muhammadan expectations and prophecies but with the very principles of Islam. In saying this we do not mean to insist upon a too literal fulfilment of such prophecies, but we cannot ignore their general tenor and the main outlines, and these are entirely inconsistent with the claims of Bahau'lla as set forth by himself in various books written by him. Some of his followers have tried to remove the inconsistency and have claimed on his behalf

that he came in fulfilment of certain other prophecies. Thus the author of the *Bahr-ul-Irfan* alleges that the advent of Bahaualla is the second advent of Husain in the terminology of the Shiahs which must take place after the advent of the Mahdi. This explanation, inconsistent as it is with the utterances of Bahaualla himself, cannot give any satisfaction to a Muslim, for the return to life of Husain is one of the extravagances of the Shiah sect and has no foundation in any reliable tradition or in the Holy Quran. The great difficulty of the Babis lies in the acceptance of Ali Muhammad, the founder of Babiism, as the expected Mahdi. The Bab claimed the fulfilment of all the prophecies in his own person and hence he also assumed the title of *nugta* or the point, indicating that he was the focus toward which all prophecies converged. It will thus be seen that though Bahaualla claimed to have come in fulfilment of Muhammadan prophecies and expectations, there is not the least trace in these prophecies and expectations of any thing which should lend a colour to that claim.

It will perhaps be interesting to learn Bahaualla's mode of interpretation in applying certain words of the Holy Quran to his own appearance. In one of his writings—the name of the book is not given—he first claims that with his appearance the Resurrection day has set in, and then himself asks, where are heaven and hell to be seen if it is the judgment day? The answer given to this question is: "To see me is paradise, and thy own self is hell, O doubter?" And then it is asked, "Are the dead raised?" The answer is in the affirmative: "Verily the soul of the Merciful has come and the other souls have leaped with joy in the graves of bodies; so had God decreed it." And this is, in the Babi terminology, the coming to life of the dead on the judgment day. "When were the heavens rent asunder?" such being the description of the day of judgment in the Holy Quran. "The heavens were rent asunder," is the reply, "when you were in the graves of negligence and error." "Have the souls been gathered together?" is another question. "Yes! By the Lord, the souls were gathered together when you were in the cradles of delusions." One of the disciples of Bahaualla seriously argues that the Resurrection day mentioned in the Holy Quran is only a metaphorical expression for the time of Bahaualla's appearance. In support of this allegation he quotes xxx: 13 which runs thus: "And on that day when the Hour shall

arrive, shall men be separated one from another" (*Bahr-ul-Irfan* p. 234). The argument used is that since on the actual day of the Resurrection, no separation can take place, therefore the "Hour" spoken of in the verse indicates the day of Bahau'lla's appearance. One need only read a few verses before and after the verse quoted above to find the true meaning. We give below the two preceding and the two subsequent verses: "And on the day when the Hour shall arrive, the guilty shall be struck dumb for despair, and they shall have no intercessors from among the gods they have joined with God, and they shall deny the gods they joined with God." Here follows the verse which, it is alleged, refers to Bahau'lla's appearance: "And on that day when the Hour shall arrive, shall men be separated one from another." And this separation is explained in the very next verse: "As for those who have believed and done righteous deeds, they shall be made joyful in flowery gardens. But as for those who have not believed, and treated our signs and the meeting of the next life as lies, these shall be given over to the torment." If these verses speak of Bahau'lla's appearance, there is nothing in the world that does not. Similarly, the following verse of the 29th chapter of the Holy Quran which speaks of the Resurrection day is quoted as referring to the appearance of Bahau'lla: "But on the day of Resurrection some of you shall deny the others, and some of you shall curse the others" (xxix: 24). It is argued that since Bahau'lla and his disciples were denied and cursed, therefore the verse referred to the appearance of Bahau'lla. But such an argument shows sheer ignorance of the Quran or an over-zealousness to make everything a prophecy of Bahau'lla's appearance. It is a part of the address of Abraham to the idolaters to whom he was preaching. Here is the context: "And Abraham said, 'Of a truth you have taken idols along with God as an object of love in this life present, but on the day of Resurrection some of you shall deny the others and some of you shall curse the others, and your abode shall be the fire, and you shall have none to help.'" No sane person could take these words for a prophecy of Bahau'lla's appearance.

The next claim of Bahau'lla is that he came to fulfil the prophecies uttered by Jesus, and accordingly we find him addressing the Christians. The following passage occurs in the *Kitab-ul-Aqdas*: "O people of the Injil (the Gospel)! verily the door of heaven has been

opened, and he who ascended to it has come, and verily he cries in the land and the sea, and gives to all the glad tidings of this manifestation of which the tongue of Mightiness had spoken. Verily the promise has been fulfilled and here is the promised one." He did not of course mean that he was the Jesus Christ that had ascended to heaven according to the Christian belief, for this statement is followed by another according to which he claimed that he was the Spirit of Truth mentioned in the Gospels. On page 103 of the same book we read : " Say, I swear by God, verily what was written in the books of God, the Lord of worlds, has come to pass. Verily he it is who is called Yahweh in the Old Testament, and the Spirit of Truth in the New Testament, and the ' Great News ' in the Quran." According to this latter statement Bahauulla claimed that he fulfilled the Christian prophecy with regard to the coming of the Spirit of Truth.

It should be borne in mind that in the Gospels two distinct prophecies are given, the one speaking of the second advent of Jesus, and the other of the coming of the Spirit of Truth. The latter prophecy is met with in the Gospel of John. " I have yet many things to say to you," Jesus is made to say, " but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth and he will show you things to come " (John 16 : 12- 13), and elsewhere in the same Gospel it is said : " He shall give you another comforter that he may abide with you for ever."

The prophecy of the second advent of Jesus is mentioned at great length in the Gospel of Matthew, and it is an error to confuse these two distinct prophecies. According to the Christians the prophecy relating to the Spirit of Truth was fulfilled by the descent of the Holy Spirit, the third person of Trinity, upon the apostles of Jesus Christ, while the prophecy relating to the second advent of Jesus remains still to be fulfilled, and he who is supposed to have ascended to the heavens is expected back in the clouds some time. According to the Muhammadan interpretation of the Gospel prophecies, the promised comforter or the Spirit of Truth appeared in the person of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, the founder of Islam, while the second advent of Christ is expected by them in these latter days, the true interpretation of that advent being, according to the Holy Quran, as I have already shown, the appearance of a Messiah among

the Muhammadans who should appear in the spirit and power of Jesus Christ, the Israelite Messiah.

Bahau'lla's claim to be the Spirit of Truth which was promised in the Gospels falls to the ground upon his own admission made elsewhere. In the letter which Bahau'lla wrote to the Shah of Persia, he applies the prophecy of the appearance of "another comforter," or the Spirit of Truth, after Jesus, to the Holy Prophet, Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, and accordingly he could not lay claim to the fulfilment of that prophecy in his own person. The position of Bahau'lla with regard to these prophecies is made still more complicated by the author of the *Bahr-ul-Irfân* who applies to the Holy Prophet, Muhammad, all the prophecies contained in the Gospels, that is to say, the prophecies relating to the appearance of the Spirit of Truth and those relating to the second advent of Christ, and reserves for Bahau'lla only a single prophecy in the Revelations. The prophecy contained in the parable of the Lord of the vineyard is also applied to Bahau'lla by some of his followers, the servants in the parable being considered to be the prophets, the son of the Lord of the Vineyard Jesus Christ, and the Lord of the Vineyard who came after all being supposed to be Bahau'lla himself, the place allotted to the Holy Prophet Muhammad being that of the seal of the prophets with a special mission. All these considerations, therefore, point out clearly that Bahau'lla claimed neither to be the Spirit of Truth nor the Messiah spoken of in the Gospels, though he did affirm that Jesus Christ had spoken of him. It is, therefore, a clear error to consider the advent of Bahau'lla as the second advent of Jesus Christ.

Now comes in the turn of the Jews. Bahau'lla's mission was for them as well as for the Christians and the Muhammadans, and we are told in the *Kitab-ul-Aqdas* that in the Old Testament he was spoken of as *Yahweh*. Beyond this Bahau'lla himself tells us nothing but the deficiency is made up by his disciples, and a large number of quotations from the books of the Old Testament are given, which the reader is asked to take for prophecies of Bahau'lla's advent. Their application to Bahau'lla, however, belongs not to the domain of fact but to that of fancy, and the mode of interpretation adopted is the same as that adopted by the Christians in making

these or similar prophecies applicable to Jesus Christ. Thus we find that though Bahaulla claimed to have come in fulfilment of the prophecies uttered by the prophets of God, he could not mention the particular prophecy which his advent had fulfilled, nor did he lay claim to be the Messiah whose advent is expected in the latter days by both the Muhammadans and the Christians.

So much for Bahaulla's claims to have appeared in fulfilment of prophecies made known to different peoples. We have now to see what was the avowed object of his advent. In one of his works he tells us that he had come "for your salvation and for making you attain the nearness of God." Such is the avowed object of every religion in the world. But the important question is, what are the methods suggested by a religion to attain salvation or the nearness of God, and how can a person know that by following those methods he is sure to attain the object? These are or should be a person's first consideration in arriving at a true conclusion as to the truth or falsehood of a religion. As regards the first of these, Bahaulla tells his followers to have a faith in him as the one God—a faith so perfect that it should not have the shadow of a doubt about it—and to act in conformity with the injunctions given by him regarding prayers, fasting, alms, pilgrimage, etc. Faith in Bahaulla does not benefit a person unless he observes the practices enjoined by him and *vice versa*. But it is not at all made clear how one should be satisfied that the Babi religion leads to salvation and the nearness of God. There is no criterion given by which one may be able to arrive at a conclusion as to whether faith in Bahaulla and the observance of the practices laid down by him can actually lead a man to the goal to which it professes to take him. It is asserted indeed in one place that the first thing which a true knowledge of God creates is love and harmony and that religion of God is only another name for union and agreement between people, but if this were to be regarded as a criterion, the Babi religion with schisms within its own circle quarreling with and cursing each other like the deadliest enemies would perhaps be the last religion that can stand the test.

We have now to see what it is that Bahaulla claims to be. Does he claim that he is a prophet like the prophets of God? To have a clear idea of what he actually claims to be, we must read one of his books,

though after its perusal one would be unable to say what it is that he aims at in his writings. If there is anything on which stress is laid in the Babi or the Bahai scriptures, it is the Divinity and praise of Bahauulla and of such of the Babis as accepted his claims. Throughout these books they are mentioned by name one by one again and again and the so called revelation of Bahauulla is never tired of praising them. The following quotation is the literal translation of a piece taken at random from the chief writing of Bahauulla, the *Kitab-ul-Aqdas*, and is intended to give the reader a true idea of Bahauulla's claims and of the worth of the sacred Babi books, the self-same subject being reiterated again and again in the *Kitab-ul-Aqdas* as well as other writings of Bahauulla :—

“ This is the day in which the Book speaks before the face of the world and says there is no God but He, the Mighty, the Giver. Verily my name upon whom be my glory appeared at the rise of the sun of manifestation and mentioned the names of those who aimed at the greatest goal and the highest summit and the farthest end. Among them there are those who reached (the goal) and drank (at it) and succeeded, and among them there are those who set out for it and made haste (to reach it,) and among them there are those who drank a drink from the hand only out of the great ocean, and among them there are those whom the intoxication of the wine of knowledge has overtaken in such a manner that they fly in the air of the love of their Lord, the Merciful, and burn with the fire of the commandments of their Lord, the Kind, the Mighty and the Gracious. Verily we praise every name as it should be praised in our presence, for verily He is the Mighty and the most Gracious. O Nasrulla! the persecuted one (*i. e.* Bahauulla) praised thee before with a praise before which all praises lower their head. Verily we command thee and those who have believed to do that with which the signs of the Merciful may become manifest in the world and his commandment may attain to a height among the people. When the morning of manifestation spread its banners and he who had spoken on the mount Sinai (to Moses) came into the world, the learned men stood up against him. Some of them declared him to be an infidel, some turned away, some advanced objections against him, and some gave against him judgment of a persecution with which the veils of

sacredness have been rent asunder and the eyes of the righteous have been filled with tears. Thus did their mind contrive these affairs. We bear witness that they are the companions of fire. Say, O people of the Bayan (followers of the Bab who refused to accept Bahau'lla)! give away surmises. Beware that you behave like those who behaved before you; fear the Merciful and be not of those who have turned aside from God, the Lord of Lords.

"O Qasim! leave what is with the people, and take hold of my book with such power that armies and swords may not withhold thee. Say, O people of the earth! we have shown you the perishableness of what is with you and have made you listen to the mention of death on all occasions. Give away what is with you of doubts and suspicions and take hold of what you have been given by God, the Lord of worlds. Remain firm in serving my friends and uttering my praise and holding strongly by the rope of my favour: thus the persecuted one commands thee from the highest place.

"Verily we mention in this place Muhammad Ali who has got mixed his flesh with the flesh of his Lord and his blood with his blood and his body with his body and his bones with the bones of his Lord, the Mighty, the Gracious. My high pen bears witness that he has gained what no one else before him has gained and to him has come that the like of which the ear has not heard. On him be my glory and the glory of my Majesty and Omnipotence and of the dwellers of the cities of justice and equity. May it do to thee good, O Muhammad! for thou hast come off successful with the wine of the Bayan from thy Lord, the Merciful. Thus has shone the sun of argument from the horizon of the sky of the favours of thy Lord, the Lord of the world.

"O Abdul Karim (*lit.*, the servant of the Gracious one)! the Gracious one has come and every miser and doubter has turned away from him. Verily the sea of beneficence is throwing up high billows before the world but most people are in wonderful surmises. Verily they have thrown the commandment of God behind their backs; verily they have veils before them which hide from them God, the sender of signs.

"O Muhammad! we have praised thee before this and now

again (we praise thee.) What thou didst send in my name Almahdi has reached the persecuted one. We send thee a reply again in this tablet which has shone forth from the horizon of the favour of thy Lord, the Controller of the winds. Glad tidings to the essence which has not been withheld by any thing and to the soul which has not been kept in veil by human bodies from this horizon which when it shone forth, the souls fell down in prostration before it. And glad tidings to him who has come off successful with the praise of his Lord in this day in which the four corners of the world have stood up in enmity.

“O Abu Talib ! thou art he who hast aimed at the highest goal, and traversed lands and seas until thou didst reach this noble valley in which has been raised the voice of the Glorious one saying that there is no God but I the protector of all that exists and all that shall exist. Thou hast come and seen that from which the whole world is kept back and thou hast listened to that which the point of existence listened : to this the first chapter of the Bayan bears witness. Mention to the people what thou hast seen and heard and be firm in this in such a manner that the veils of the learned ones and the despotism of the rich ones may not keep thee in veil. Have in all matters thy trust in God, the owner of necks. Magnify on my behalf in the presence of my friends those who have come forward to the high horizon and borne witness to that to which God has borne witness in the beginning and in the end.

“O Ali Ashraf ! Thank God that he has chosen thee for this dispensation with which the minds of the *mushriks* (deniers of the divinity of Bahauulla) have been perturbed and the minds of the righteous have been set at rest. Verily we have mentioned thee and those who have believed, a grace from us, for thy Lord is the Mighty and the Gracious.

“O Aqa Bala ! the Lord of the worlds praised thee in his great prison with a praise which brings thee nearer God, the One, the Mighty, the Indulgent. Verily we command thee and those that have believed to act with wisdom which we have sent down with grace in papers and tablets. Take hold of that with which you have been commanded and do not follow those who have broken the

covenant of God and his agreement, for verily they are of the people of error. Thus has the pen of the Merciful run in the field of wisdom and explanation that it may draw you to a place in which nothing is seen but the signs of God, the Manifester of arguments.

"And we praise thy brother named Qasim, and we give him the glad tidings of the favour of God and his grace and we command him to do that which raises the place of man in existence.

"O Abdul Khaliq (*lit.*, the servant of the Creator)! see and then think that when the Creator came, the creatures turned aside from him, such a turning aside that the clouds wept thereat. They turned aside and denied him until they gave judgments against him without reason and argument. Leave the creation and what is with them, taking hold of the truth which speaks from the highest heights of the world, saying there is no God but I, the Mighty and the Omniscient. Verily most of the people are playing with the dust of their surmises. I swear by God that they are more contemptible than a fly in the sight of the Self-sufficient, the High one. Glad tidings to the people of Baha who have embarked on the red ship which passes over land and water with his name which is a Guardian over all names. Be firm in my commandments and utter my praise and fly in my atmosphere and hold fast my skirt which God has made the owner of all skirts. Verily we have smelled in thee the scent of my love. We have praised thee with a voice with which the truth of all praises has been drawn. Say, I swear by God that the Hidden one has come and the dwellers of the Sinai have fallen down senseless except those whom God has protected as a grace from him and has saved with the hands of power.

"O Sayyid (*lit.* Lord)! the Lord of the world praises thee from his great prison that thou mayest be glad and be in joy and cheerfulness. Beware lest the condition of the world should make thee grieve. Keep thine eye at the high horizon and hold fast by the covenant of God, the sender of rains. Say, O people of the Bayan! do not set up gods with God (*i. e.*, take Bahaualla to be your only God,) and do not fight with the signs with which your faith in God, the owner of inventions, is established. Say, leave what is with you and take what is with God, for he guides you to

the right path. Shining glory from the horizon of the heaven of my favour be on the people of Baha who have cast off the world and advanced towards the rising place of lights.

“O my pen! praise him who is named Sikandar, and give him the glad tidings that the sun of eloquence has shone forth from the horizon of the Merciful so that he should rejoice with his name, and be of those who are thankful. Verily thou hast attained thy object by the praise of my high pen before this and now. Beware lest anything should cause thee to grieve or the fear of those who have denied the Lord of the day of judgment should terrify thee.”

I have given this rather lengthy quotation from the Gospel of Bahaulla with a twofold object. Firstly, that the reader should be able to form a true idea about the Bahai scriptures. I can say without fear of being contradicted that with the exception of a few practices given in the beginning of the book, the *Kitáb-ul-Aqdas* contains nothing of which the above quotation may not be a fair specimen. In fact, there is nothing in it beyond a reiteration of the same subject if these random phrases without any definite sense may be said to deal with a subject. The second object I had in view was to show the real nature of Bahaulla's claim. Though he often refers to himself as *mazlum*, meaning one who was persecuted, yet he at the same time repeatedly calls himself God, Creator, Merciful Mighty, Omniscient, Lord of the Day of Judgment, Controller of winds, &c, and applies to himself every attribute of the Divine Being. He not only calls the followers of all other religions *mushriks* (those who set up gods with God,) but applies the same epithet also to those adherents of the Babi religion who refused to accept him. According to his doctrine, therefore, he himself was the true God and hence those who worshipped God, but did not worship him and accept him as God were condemned as *mushriks*. The recognition of the divinity of Bahaulla is thus the central doctrine of the Babi religion, or more properly of the Bahai sect of the Babi religion.

Evidence to the same effect is met with in Bahaulla's application of certain prophecies to himself. He plainly says in the *Kitab-ul-Aqdas* that he is called *Yehovah* in the Old Testament. Now

Yehovah is a name which with the Israelites is the most sacred of all names and never has this name been applied to any being except God. Among the Jewish people and in the Jewish literature it is exclusively a name of the Divine Being. By adopting that name, Bahaualla, therefore, clearly assumed the dignity of Godhead and was thus guilty of the greatest blasphemy that the lips of man can utter. He also claimed to be the Lord of the vineyard in the Gospel parable of the Lord of the vineyard or at least his disciples advanced that claim for him. The Israelite prophets according to this interpretation were the servants, the Holy Prophet Muhammad with a special mission was the seal of the prophets, Jesus Christ was the son and hence the son of God, Bahaualla was the Lord of the vineyard or God Himself. The day of prophethood and sonship are passed, we are told in a Babi writing, and this is the time of the Lord God himself who appeared in the person of Bahaualla. Similarly, Bahaualla's claim that the time of his appearance is the Day of Judgment spoken of in the Holy Quran is really a claim to Divinity, and whatever is spoken of in the Holy Book regarding the presence of God on the Day of Judgment is actually contended as meaning the presence of Bahaualla. Books written by his disciples are full of similar extravagant claims. For instance in the Quran in the chapter entitled the Resurrection it is stated as expressive of the condition of the righteous on the day of judgment: "On that day there shall be faces beaming with light looking towards their Lord." It is asserted that "Lord" here refers to Bahaualla.

There are no doubt words in Bahaualla's writings from which it appears that he considered himself a man who received revelation from another source, but such words occur either in his early writings or in those written with some particular object. Read the *Kitab-ul-Aqdas* or any of his other books which contain "tablets" written to disciples, and you will find him describing himself as God, the ruler of the universe, the Omniscient, the knower of all secrets, the Lord of the worlds, the mighty, and so on. But take the letter written to the Shah of Persia and there he describes himself as a man believing in God. That letter begins with these words:—

"O King of earth! listen to the cry of this slave. I am a slave

who believe in God and His signs and I have sacrificed my life in His way I do not invite people except to thy Lord and the Lord of worlds." And again in the same letter written to appease the Shah, he says: "O Sultan! I was an ordinary man and sleeping . . . and He gave me the knowledge of what was . . . and He commanded me to raise a cry between earth and heaven." Contrast with these statements the extravagant claims made in writings intended for his disciples where he calls himself "one with whose word a thousand eternities are and may be created," and other such expressions some of which would be found in the quotation from the *Kitab-ul-Aqdas* given above. The followers of Bahaualla also understand his claims as amounting to Divinity, and as against the sonship of Jesus they maintain the doctrine of the Lordship of Bahaualla. In a pamphlet which describes the differences between the two sects into which the sect of Bahaualla has been divided, the difference between the claims of Bahaualla and of the prophets that have gone before him is thus stated:

"The distinctive characteristic of this manifestation (*i.e.*, Bahaualla) from all other manifestations (*i.e.*, the prophets) is this that they stood in two places (*i.e.*, partook of Divinity as well as humanity.) When they utterly forgot their own existence and annihilated their existence completely, they cried out I am He, and when they were again conscious of their own existence, they said I am I. But this shining manifestation (*i.e.*, Bahaualla) was the very He (God) who had worn the clothes of I (man) Hence it was that he said there is none in the world but myself. The point (Ali Muhammad) also predicted that he (Bahaualla) would say under all circumstances, 'verily I am God, there is no God but I, the one and without a partner, the Omniscient and the knower of all secrets, All the manifestations that have hitherto appeared and that shall appear to the day of judgment were as looking glasses and every one according to his capacity spoke of that sun of reality (*i.e.*, God,) but this manifestation (Bahaualla) is that very sun. Hence he said, 'Unity is this that thou shouldst recognise one as one and know it to be free from numbers, not that two should be taken as one. The essence of unity is this that the manifestation of truth (Bahaualla) and the Hidden one who cannot be known should be

considered as one, in this sense that the deeds and the injunctions and the prohibitions of the one should be considered as those of the other, and that there should be no idea of union with or separation from him. 'This is a place which in the heavens and the earth is limited to one only and cannot be shared by anybody else.' Regarding the place of the great sinlessness and the dignity of doing what one likes, he (Bahaualla) says, 'In the great *ismat* (sinlessness) this manifestation has no associate, for he is the manifestation of doing what he likes in the kingdom of will. This place God has particularised for his own person and no share has been decreed for anybody else in this mighty place. Verily this is an embroidery which the hands of power have woven for the person of God only and it does not become anybody except him who sits on the throne of all-powerfulness doing what he likes' And again he said, 'The great sinlessness is the characteristic of the glorious God, none is an associate with him in this.' And again, 'As regards the great sinlessness, it is for him who stands beyond all injunctions and prohibitions, and purified from all errors and forgetfulness, for verily he is the light after which there is no darkness, and he is the right after which there is no wrong. If such a person pronounces water to be wine or heaven to be earth or light to be hell, it is without doubt all true and no one has any right to object to him or to say why and wherefore; and if anyone objects, he is of those who turn aside in the book of God, the Lord of worlds, for he is not questioned of what he does but all others shall be questioned of what they do'."

It will be easily seen that the word God in the above quotation refers to Bahaualla, and the "Great Sinlessness" which is said to be characteristic of God is claimed by Bahaualla for himself. This doctrine of the "Great Sinlessness" was invented by Bahaualla, as I will show just now, to meet the numerous objections advanced against his claim. The author of the work from which I have made the above extract goes on to say :—

"All the prophets received revelation from God but Bahaualla did not submit to any intention or will save his own As the person of the sacred *abha* was the person of the Hidden one himself,

he did not look upon any being as higher than himself and did not consider any person as a ruler over him and there was nothing that was hidden from him."

The doctrine of the "Great Sinlessness" occupies a very prominent place in the religion of Bahauulla. The doctrine of sinlessness of prophets is held in the Muhammadan religion, but Bahauulla claimed to be more than a prophet and hence sinlessness in the ordinary sense of that word was not suitable to his claims. The doctrine of the "Great Sinlessness" is thus explained by Bahauulla himself:—

"Know that sinlessness has several meanings and several grades. He whom God protects from falling into errors deserves to be called sinless in one sense, and so also the person who is preserved by God from sin and disobedience and turning aside and unbelief and *shirk* and such other things, every one of such persons is sinless. But as regards the Great Sinlessness, it is for him only who attains to such a high dignity that he no more submits to injunctions and prohibitions and who is purified from every fault and forgetfulness, for he is the light which is not followed by any darkness and he is the *sawáb* (what is right and true) with which there is no fault. If such a person pronounces water to be wine or heaven to be earth or light to be hell, it is all true in which there is not the least doubt, and no one has the right to object or to ask the why and wherefore of these things. He who objects shall be counted among those who have turned aside from the right path: thus it is written in the book of God, the Lord of worlds. For verily, he cannot be questioned about what he does while all others shall be questioned of all they do. For verily he has come from the heaven of the unknown and with him is a banner that he may do what he wills, and with him are the armies of mightiness and power. Upon all others lies the obligation that they should hold fast and act upon the laws and commandments which are given them. If any one departs a single hair's breadth from these commandments, all his deeds shall be as naught."

This doctrine of the "Great Sinlessness" is really the only doctrine which can justify the sayings and doings of Bahauulla. The ordinary doctrine of sinlessness means that a person should not be

guilty of sin, but the doctrine of the "Great Sinlessness" in the religion of Bahauulla means that whatever a person may do or say should not be looked upon as a sin and should not be objected to. If he drinks wine and tells his followers that it is water, they must believe it. The person who claims sinlessness has an obligation imposed upon himself, but he who claims the "Great Sinlessness" imposes an obligation upon others and requires them to have a blind faith in all his sayings and doings however objectionable they may appear to them to be. In this lies the chief distinction between sinlessness and great sinlessness, or between the prophets of God and Bahauulla. By no other means could he justify what he did and said, and the doctrine was of special service in meeting the objections of the Babis who did not accept Bahauulla. They were told in effect that no objection could be advanced against him. How far this doctrine is in consonance with reason, I leave for the reader to judge.

Christ in the Quran.

Under the above heading Dr. Nishikanta Chattopadhyaya, who after going through a variety of religious experiences is now a Roman Catholic Christian, has contributed an article to the August number of the *Hindustan Review*, in which it is sought to prove that Christ as described in the Quran is not a human being but God. He puts the conclusion of his article in the following words: "Having repeatedly called Christ, the 'Word of God,' the 'Spirit of God,' and others of the same import, having, besides, admitted all his miracles—His power over the quick and the dead—of curing the blind, the deaf, the leper and the paralytic—of creating a bird out of clay and of causing a table filled with living provisions to descend from the Heavens, having in other words, admitted all the qualities that belong to God and to God alone, it is hardly logical to hesitate to draw the necessary inference, namely, the Divinity of Christ. It is similar to allowing a man all the powers and prerogatives of royalty and yet to deny him the title of a sovereign! The logical and the legitimate inference that must consequently be

drawn from all the passages about Jesus Christ in the Quran is the Divinity of Christ and no other."

Considering the terms in which the Holy Quran speaks of Jesus Christ, the conclusion at which Dr. Nishikanta Chattopadhyaya has arrived is the very opposite of correct. A large number of quotations from the Arabic text of the Holy Quran does not prove that a person is learned in the Holy Quran, and with due deference to the abilities of the learned writer in other directions, I am bound to say that his article shows a deplorable ignorance of the Holy Quran [coupled with an illogicalness unworthy of such a learned writer. To show that from the description of Jesus Christ as given in the Holy Quran, the "logical and legitimate inference that must be drawn" is his Divinity, it ought to have been shown that the characteristic qualities of Jesus as given in the Holy Book are identical with the attributes of the Divine Being as contained therein, for it is admitted that the Holy Quran emphatically denies the Divinity of Jesus in plain words. But he has not done this. It is indeed illogical to say that a man has "all the powers and prerogatives of royalty and yet to deny him the title of a sovereign," but has Dr. Chattopadhyaya shown that the Quran ascribes to Jesus all the attributes of the Divine Being? The words in which he has stated his conclusion show that he has not, and accordingly there is no parallelism between his case and the illustration he gives. In this the learned writer of the article in the *Hindustan Review* has followed a course which is absolutely illogical. His lack of the knowledge of the Holy Quran is clear from the fact that he thinks that such epithets as the "Word of God" or the "Spirit of God" are used to describe the Divine Being in the Holy Quran or that the performance of certain miracles is an attribute of the Divine Being and that no other prophet is described to have performed miracles similar to those attributed to Jesus Christ. I will now take up his arguments one by one and point out their weakness.

One inconsistency which runs throughout the article written by Dr. Chattopadhyaya I may point out at the beginning, because it shows that the writer did not take up his subject in an impartial spirit but actually to prop up his own present convictions in the Divinity of Jesus Christ. At the very commencement of his article

he writes: "These references to Christ in the Quran carry more than usual weight chiefly for the following two reasons:—(1) Because they are not merely the sayings of the Prophet of Islam, but are actual revelations made through him by God Himself." Here he clearly admits the description of Jesus in the Holy Quran to be a Divine revelation through the Prophet and not a saying of the Prophet himself because he thinks that the argument supports his own convictions. But the whole of his article shows that he does not believe the Quranic description of Jesus to be a revelation from God but considers some points in that description to have been taken from one source and some from another. For instance, after referring to the passages which he thinks "fully confirm the miraculous birth of Christ" he adds: "Is it not, therefore, reasonable to suppose that the Prophet derived his information about the Nativity of Christ from some of the Apocrypha of the heretical sects whom the persecutions of Nero, Domitian, Diocletian and of other Roman Emperors had driven to take refuge in Arabia and whose schismatic opinions were finally discarded [as unauthoritative at the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. under Constantine the Great]? And again, referring to certain miracles he says: "This miracle was evidently derived from some reminiscences of *Lord's Supper* which must have reached the Prophet through some source or other." Referring to the Holy Quran's denial of the sonship of Christ and of his death on the cross, the same writer, who, in the beginning of his article, considers the whole Quranic description of Jesus to be a Divine revelation, adds at the end: "Is it not then possible, that when Muhammad had finally made up his mind to found a *national* religion for Arabia, he deliberately caught up this idea from the Basilidians, incorporated it into his own, and thus raised a differentiating and insuperable barrier between his own creed and that of Christ?" After reading these remarks, an intelligent reader would naturally ask, was it simply to serve a particular purpose that Dr. Chattopadhyaya wrote at the commencement of his article that the references to Christ in the Quran carried an extraordinary degree of weight because they were "actual revelations by God Himself?" It is to be regretted that the Christians have not yet adopted a critical and impartial attitude towards the Holy Quran. To serve their own purpose they would call it a Divine revelation and turn and twist

its words, but when that is done, they do not hesitate to charge with deliberate misrepresentation of facts the very man whose word on other occasions they recognise to be an actual revelation from God.

The following are the allegations of Dr. Chattopadhyaya from which he draws the conclusion of Christ's Divinity:—

(1.) He is called the "Word of God."

(2.) He is called the "Spirit of God."

(3.) He is described as the "Intercessor" or "Mediator" of mankind in the next world.

(4.) He is recognised as having "exceptionally close relationship with God Himself."

(5.) He is described as having been conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Ghost.

(6.) He is mentioned as having been born "holy" or "sinless."

(7.) He is stated to have come down to the world as "a sign to mankind and mercy from God."

(8.) The "death and resurrection" of Christ are admitted in the Quran.

(9.) He is admitted to have had "the power of creating and of quickening the dead" which is an *essentially Divine power*.

(10.) According to the Quran, every Jew, Christian and Muhammadan must acknowledge Jesus Christ to be his "Lord and Saviour" before he dies.

(11.) Jesus is represented as being the "final judge of all mankind at the day of Resurrection."

(12.) He is admitted to have "really died on the cross," and then to have been "directly taken up into the bosom of God."

Some of these allegations are absolutely unfounded while others are based on a distorted sense of the words of the Holy Quran. I shall deal with these allegations one by one.

1.—The Word of God.

The expression “ word of God ” occurs in the Holy Quran a large number of times. Had the Holy Quran considered Jesus to be the only word of God, we should not have met with such expressions in the Holy Book as the following: “And if all the trees that are upon the earth were to become pens, and if God should after that swell the sea into seven seas of *ink*, God’s words would not be exhausted ” (xxi : 26). And again: “ Should the sea become ink for the words of my Lord, the sea would surely fail ere the words of my Lord would fail, though We brought its like in aid ” (xviii : 109). These verses show that “ word of God ” is not an epithet exclusively applied to Jesus Christ.

Let us now take the verses in which Jesus Christ is spoken of as the word of God. Dr. Chattopadhyaya quotes iii : 40 which runs thus: “ Remember when the angels said, ‘O Mary! verily God announceth to thee a word from Him: his name shall be the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary.’ ” And in iv: 169, 170, Almighty God thus speaks of Jesus Christ: “The Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, is only an apostle of God, and His word which He conveyed to Mary, and a Spirit from Him. Believe, therefore, in God and His apostles, and say not there is a Trinity—Forbear—it will be better for you. God is only one God! Far be it from His glory that He should have a son. Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His! and God is a sufficient guardian. The Messiah by no means disdains to be a servant of God, nor do the angels who are nigh unto Him.”

I would first point out the errors made by Christian writers in the translation of these verses. In the first of the verses quoted above, we have the word *kalima* without the definite article before it and accordingly it means *a word* and not *the word* as Dr. Chattopadhyaya and some Christian translators put it. There is no equivalent of *the* in the original, and hence to Mary was announced only *a word* from God. This interpretation supports the contention we have already made, *viz.*, that Jesus Christ according to the Holy Quran is not the word of God but only one of His words. In the second verse, the words *كلمة (لقها) لبي مریم* “ and His word which

He conveyed to Mary " are translated " His word which He conveyed into Mary." The word *لى* means *to* and not *into*, but the erroneous interpretation is intentionally adopted to make the verse read as if the word of God was conveyed into the womb of Mary and there it became flesh. The reason of these errors is that the ultrametaphysical terminology of the Gospel of St. John is sought to be introduced into the Holy Quran to explain or rather to mystify its simple words. "In the beginning was the Word. . . and the Word was God" so says John at the outset of his Gospel, and in interpreting the plain words of the Holy Quran which says "O Mary! verily God announces to thee a word from Him," the Christian writers convert the "a word from Him" of the Holy Quran into the "the Word" of John I: 1. Again John says that "the Word was made flesh," and it is this sense which the Christian writers try to distort from the plain words of the Holy Quran when it says that it was His word which "He conveyed to Mary." Now this is not the right mode of the interpretation of the words of the Holy Quran: it is to the Holy Quran itself and the Arabic language and literature that we must look for the true significance of the word *kalima* or word as used in the Holy Quran in connection with Jesus.

In the first place, we will show what *kalima* or word does not mean. Take the second of the verses quoted above. It begins with the words, "O people of the Book! overstep not bounds in your religion and of God speak only the truth," and then follows what is said of Jesus as quoted above. The verse, therefore, accuses the Christians of overstepping the bounds in their belief with regard to Jesus. What that belief was is also clearly indicated in this very verse— "Say not there is a Trinity: God is only one God." Therefore the verse is a clear denial of the Divinity of Jesus and of his being the second person of Trinity. Hence whatever the words "His word which He conveyed to Mary" might signify, they cannot signify that he was one of the persons of Trinity, or a Divine Being. The verse is meant to refute the Divinity of Jesus, and whatever may be the conclusion to which other verses of the Holy Quran might give rise, the conclusion of the Divinity of Jesus cannot be drawn from this verse. What it says is this in effect: "O Christians! do not ascribe Divinity to Jesus; he is only an apostle of God and His word which He conveyed to Mary and

a spirit from Him. Do not believe in Trinity, God is only one Jesus himself does not disdain to be a servant of God for even the angels who are not human and who are nigh unto Him do not disdain to be servants of God!" The context is too clear to admit of any distortion of the plain words of the verse to make them yield the conclusion of the Divinity of Jesus.

We have now to see what is meant by saying that Jesus Christ was a word of God. The Arabic word is *kalima* which means anything spoken by a person—a word, speech, or sentence. Again, the Holy Qūran tells us that when Almighty God intends that anything should come into existence, He says to it 'Be' and it comes into existence *انما امره اذا اراد شيئا ان يقول له كن فيكون* Thus it is with His word that Almighty God creates things. It is in this sense that created things are called the words of God because it is with the word of God that they are created, and it is to the boundlessness of the creation of God that such verses as those quoted above refer—"Should the sea become ink for the words of my Lord, the sea would surely fail ere the words of my Lord would fail, though We brought its like in aid (xviii: 109.) But it may be asked, what is the reason for particularly mentioning that Jesus was a word of God? For this we must cast a glance at the circumstances relating to his birth. In the verses that follow iii: 40, where Jesus is referred to as a word from God, Mary is made to say: "How, O my Lord! shall I have a son, when man has not touched me?" And in reply she is told: "Thus God creates what He wills. When He has decreed a thing, then He only says 'Be,' and it comes into existence." Apparently therefore Jesus was born without the intervention of a father, and hence he is particularly mentioned as a word of God, because his mother did not conceive him in the ordinary course of nature but the word of God "Be" was particularly pronounced in his case.

The conclusion arrived at above is supported by other verses. In the verses following those quoted above the creation of Jesus is compared to the creation of Adam. Thus the 52nd verse says: "Verily the similitude of Jesus is as the similitude of Adam in the sight of God: He created him of earth and then said to him 'Be,' and he came into existence." A likeness is here established between Adam and Jesus in the modes of their creation. In both cases, we are told, it was the effect

of Almighty God pronouncing "Be" that they came into existence; in other words, it was a word of God that produced them. But the likeness established clearly shows that as Divinity could not be ascribed to Adam merely because he came into life without having a father and a mother, so it could not be ascribed to Jesus also for having been born without a father. This verse conclusively settles that it was in this sense only that Jesus was called a word of God, and that there was nothing Divine in him beyond what ordinary human beings, the offspring of Adam, possessed. If the circumstance of being born without the intervention of a father had necessitated the introduction of a Divine element into the offspring, that element must have been introduced at the beginning in the creation of Adam.

We would add here for the further information of the reader the opinions of some commentators as to the reason on account of which Jesus was particularly mentioned as a word from God. The first reason given in almost every commentary is that his coming into existence was the result of a word of God, that is to say the Divine commandment "Be" brought him to life and there was not in his case the ordinary intervention of a male parent. Some commentators suggest that the reason of his being called a *kalima* was that he was a great preacher who was never tired of preaching to the crowds and hence he was called *kalima* (a word or a speech) in the same manner as a very charitable person may be spoken of as charity (Ar. *Jud*) itself. Others say that as the advent of the Messiah had been foretold long before by the prophets, it was in reference to the fulfilment of those prophecies that he was called a word. In other words, when Jesus was spoken of as a word of God, it was meant that he was the word of God which had been pronounced before by the mouths of the prophets of God.

I may also add that the words of the Holy Quran admit of another simple interpretation. In III : 40, all that is said to the mother of Jesus is, "God announces to thee a word from Him," and it clearly means that Almighty God announced to her a prophecy relating to the birth of a son, the italicised words being of course understood in this particular verse though they are clearly mentioned in other verses, as, for instance, in xix : 12, and then she was told that that son would be the Messiah and his name would be Jesus. In IV : 169

also the same meaning is clearly conveyed. There it is said that Jesus was God's word which He conveyed to Mary. The Arabic word is **الْقَى** which is frequently used in the Holy Quran to denote the revelation of a word from God to His servants. Therefore all that is meant is that Jesus was born in fulfilment of a prophecy which Almighty God had revealed to Mary. This explanation as well as the preceding two suggested by some commentators hold true whether Jesus may or may not have been born without the intervention of a male parent.

2.—The Spirit of God.

The expression "a spirit from God" occurs only once in the Holy Quran in connection with Jesus Christ in iv: 169 which has already been quoted. There it is said that "Jesus, son of Mary, is only an apostle of God, and His word which He conveyed to Mary and a spirit from Him." Nowhere in the Holy Quran is Jesus spoken of as "the spirit of God," and it is only another error into which the Christian writers have fallen. Now consider the following verses of the Holy Quran in which similar expressions are used. In xxxviii: 72 and xv: 29 it is said of Adam, the address being to the angels: **فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتَهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ** "When, therefore, I have formed him and breathed of My spirit into him, then fall down before him prostrating yourselves." It should be noticed that we have here not only a spirit from God but we have also an order to the angels to prostrate themselves before him. In the case of Jesus the second circumstance is altogether wanting, viz., it is nowhere stated that the angels were commanded as in the case of Adam to fall down before him in prostration. Under these circumstances it is absolutely illogical to deduce from Jesus being called a spirit from God the conclusion of his Divinity. Not only Adam but every man is described as having the spirit of God breathed into him: **وَبَدَأَ خَلْقَ الْإِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِينٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ نَسْلَهُ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِنْ** "And He began the creation of man with clay; then ordained his progeny *ex spermate genitali*, then shaped him and breathed of His spirit into him" (xxxii: 7, 8). Being called a spirit from God, therefore, does not according to the Holy Quran signify that that person is a Divine person. In xix: 17, the angel that appeared before Mary in her vision is called the spirit of

God: "We sent Our spirit to her and he appeared before her like a perfect man." Hence the spirit of God does in no case mean God Himself, not even the third person of the Trinity as the Christians would have him.

3. Mediator.

The religion of Islam teaches a very simple doctrine of intercession, according to which the Holy Prophet Muhammad is the first and the greatest intercessor of mankind, while all the prophets and righteous servants of God will also be intercessors. But here we are not to discuss that doctrine, as Dr. Chattopadhyaya bases his remarks on the interpretation of a particular word. In iii: 40 Jesus is spoken of as a prophet "illustrious in this world and the next," to which is added by Dr. Chattopadhyaya a commentative note from Al-Baidawi, "in this world as a prophet, in the next as an intercessor," from which is drawn the conclusion that he will be "our intercessor" according to the Holy Quran. The reader may easily see for what this argument is worth. But it would have been better if the whole note had been quoted which says that "he will be an intercessor for the deserving among his own people, as the other prophets will be intercessors." Neither the words of the verse nor those of the commentary lend the least support to the allegation that he will be the sole intercessor of mankind. The Arabic word from which this conclusion is drawn is **وَجِيه**, which is also applied to Moses in the Holy Quran in xxxiii: 69, which says **وَجِيهًا** **عِنْدَ اللَّهِ** "And he (Moses) was *wajeeh* or illustrious in the sight of God." If Jesus is an intercessor because he is called **وَجِيه**, Moses must also be regarded as an intercessor by the same argument. In fact, as I have already said, all the prophets are regarded as intercessors by the Muslims and to say that Jesus will be an intercessor on the day of judgment is not to distinguish him from other prophets but to say that he is also one of the prophets of God.

4. Exceptionally close relationship with God.

The fourth peculiarity of Jesus according to Dr. Chattopadhyaya is that he is spoken of in the Quran as having exceptionally close relationship with God. This conclusion is derived from the act that Jesus is said to be one of the **مُقَرَّبِينَ** *muqarrabeen*, or

“one of those who have near access to God.” If by “exceptionally close relationship with God” he means only such a close relationship as the prophets of God or other righteous men may attain to, we do not deny the truth of his allegation, but he does not gain anything thereby, for this is no argument for his divinity, other men also having such close relationship with God. But if he means that Jesus had an exceptionally close relationship with God which no other person attained, we are bound to say that there are no premises for this conclusion. The very verse which he quotes in support of his assertion shows that he is only *one of those* who have near access to God,” there being also others besides him who according to the plain import of the verse have attained a similar close relationship. The plurality of those who have near access to God or in the words of Dr. Chattopadhyaya who have exceptionally close relationship with God, the *muqarrabeen*, is also asserted in many other places in the Holy Quran; see lxvi: 11, 87, and lxxxiii: 21, 28. All these facts show that in having close relationship with God, Jesus has no superiority over other prophets, and cannot claim any distinction.

5.—Conception by the Holy Ghost.

Conception by the Holy Spirit is peculiarly a Christian doctrine and the Holy Quran looks upon it with disgust. Yet Dr. Chattopadhyaya asserts that “according to the Holy Quran Jesus Christ “was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary by the Holy Ghost.” This statement has no truth in it. The strange conclusion is drawn by him from the following verses:—

“And we sent Our spirit to her (Mary) and he appeared before her like a perfect man. She said, ‘I fly for refuge from thee to the merciful God, if thou fearest Him.’ He said, ‘I am only a messenger of thy Lord that I may bestow on thee a Holy son.’ She said ‘How shall I have a son when man has not touched me and I am not unchaste? He said, ‘So shall it be.’ Thy Lord has said, ‘Easy is this with Me’ ” (xix: 17-20). In a later chapter the same circumstances are related in the following words: “Remember, when the angel said, O Mary! verily God announceth to thee a word from Him (that a son shall be born to thee): his name shall be the

Messiah, Jesus She said, 'O my Lord, shall I have a son when man has not touched me?' He said, 'Thus: God creates what He wills; when He has decreed a thing, then He only says 'Be' and it is' " (iii: 40-42). The reader will see that in neither of these passages is it affirmed that Jesus "was conceived in the womb of Mary by the Holy Ghost," nor do the words of the Holy Quran logically lead to any such conclusion. In the first of these quotations, it is no doubt stated that the spirit of God came to Mary in the shape of a perfect man but the spirit in this verse is evidently identical with the angel in the second quotation. Moreover, it seems clear that the glad tidings were announced by the angel or the spirit to Mary in a vision and it was in a vision that she saw the angel in the form of a perfect man. The words "that I may bestow on thee a son" also do not lead to the conclusion that Mary was made to conceive by the Holy Spirit because the spirit or the angel was only the bearer of the news and his words do not mean anything more than this. Perhaps Dr. Chattopadhyaya may have been thinking of another verse which however he has not quoted or referred to in his article, *viz.*, the identical words which occur in lxvi: 12 and xxi: 91 and run thus: *والتي* "and she who kept her chasteness so We breathed of Our spirit into her." These words also do not indicate conception by the Holy Ghost, for similar words are spoken of Adam, as in xxxviii: 72 and xvi: 29—"When I have made him perfect and breathed of My spirit into him." Thus there is not a single verse in the Holy Quran which should support the contention of Dr. Chattopadhyaya that Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary by the Holy Ghost. In fact such an assertion is at variance with the whole tenor of the Holy Quran. The Gospel may have introduced the Holy Ghost—or for the reason of that, any ghost, in the place of the male parent, but the Holy Quran has not done anything of the sort, and directly or by implication such a conclusion cannot be drawn from any words used in the Holy Book.

6. Sinlessness.

Dr. Chattopadhyaya thinks that according to the Quran Jesus was born 'holy or sinless' and that this is another peculiarity which supports the case for his divinity. In support of this he produces xix: 19 in which the angel is made to say: "I am only a messenger of

thy Lord that I may bestow on thee an innocent child." The Arabic word which occurs in this verse is زكى *zaki*, and it is not applied to Jesus to the exclusion of all other men. Only a few verses before this verse we find the same word used for John the Baptist. The thirteenth and fourteenth verses run thus: "O John! receive the Book with firm resolve—and We bestowed on him, while yet a child, wisdom and mercifulness from Ourselves and holiness," the word used for holiness being زكاة *zakat* which is from the same root as *zaki*. In fact, every prophet of God is holy while besides the prophets there are also other holy men, and we find the same word used for a youth in xviii: 73, where Moses says speaking of a child who was murdered زكى *zaki* "Hast thou murdered an innocent soul who was not guilty of any murder?" The same word زكى *zaki* is used here to denote the innocence of the murdered youth as that in the case of Jesus.

It must, however, be borne in mind that an "innocent child" does not mean that the child shall remain innocent for ever, as in the case of the youth referred to above, though he was called innocent, it was at the same time stated that in later life he might become wicked. In the case of Jesus, there was a particular reason for calling the child innocent, though as a matter of fact every child is innocent before he reaches the age of discretion. The circumstances attending the birth of Jesus were such as to give his enemies an occasion to bring him into disrepute, and therefore as against their aspersions of illegitimacy he was called a holy child beforehand, for illegitimate children were considered to be unholy by the Israelites and were not even to the tenth generation allowed to "enter into the congregation of the Lord" (Deut. 23: 2.)

7.—A Sign to Mankind and Mercy from God.

Dr. Chattopadhyaya's method of arguing the Divinity of Jesus is more amusing than sound. In xix: 21 it is said: وَلَنَجْعَلَ لآيَةً لِلنَّاسِ "And so that we make him a sign for this people (*i.e.*, the Israelites) and it is a mercy from Us." It should be borne in mind that in لَنَا *lana* the prefix *al* stands for *the* and the word means *the people, i. e.*, the nation which was then being addressed or the

Israelites and it does not mean all mankind. Now the word *ayat* or sign is of such frequent occurrence in the Holy Quran that even a superficial reader of the Holy Book would consider it to be the last word which could be produced in support of the Divinity of a thing or person. I give here the translation of two or three verses:

"Verily We have made the night and the day two signs; the sign of the night do We obscure, but the sign of the day cause We to shine forth visibly" (xvii : 13.)

"Hast thou reflected that the inmates of the cave and the inscription were one of Our wondrous signs" (xviii : 8.)

"Verily in the creation of the heavens and of the earth; and in the alternation of night and day; and in the ships which pass through the sea with what is useful to man; and in the rain which God sends down from heaven, giving life by it to the earth after its death, and by scattering over it all the moving creatures; and in the change of the winds, and in the clouds that are made to do service between the heaven and the earth;—are signs for those who understand" (ii: 159.)

If all this does not satisfy Dr. Chattopadhyaya, I may draw his attention to ii: 261, whose translation as given in Rodwell is as follows: "Or *consider* him who passed by a city laid low in ruins. 'How,' said he, 'shall God give life to this city after her death'? So God caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him to life, and said, 'How long hast thou waited'? He said, 'I have waited a day or part of a day.' He said, 'Nay thou hast waited an hundred years. Look on thy food and thy drink; they are not grown mouldy; and look on thine ass, for it is Our intent to make thee a sign unto mankind. Here a prophet whose name even is not mentioned in the Holy Quran is made "a sign unto mankind," the words in the original *آية لنا* being identical with those spoken in the case of Jesus. Similarly a she-camel is also called a sign of God. No one having the slightest knowledge of the Quran could be guilty of the absurdity to argue for the Divinity of Jesus on such childish arguments, if they may at all be called arguments.

In like manner "a mercy from Us" does not prove the Divinity of Jesus. It is sufficient to quote one example of the use of the word

from the Holy Quran itself. Of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, it is said in xxi : 107, "And we have not sent thee but as a mercy to all the worlds." This is of course a much weightier expression than that used for Jesus.

8.—The Death and Resurrection of Jesus.

This inference is drawn from xix : 34, which runs thus وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا. In this verse Jesus is made to say "And the peace of God on me the day I was born, and the day that I shall die, and the day I shall be raised to life." From this is drawn the conclusion that the death and resurrection of Jesus are admitted by the Holy Quran in the same sense as the Christian doctrine puts it, viz., that Jesus died on the cross and became alive on the third day. If this is an argument for Jesus' Divinity, all men must be gods, for they are repeatedly told in the Holy Quran that they shall die and shall then be raised to life. See xxiii : 102, xxxvii : 144 ; xxxviii : 80. In xxiii : 16, it is clearly stated that all men are born, then they die and are then raised to life. As Dr. Chattopadhyaya adds "the third day" in the case of Jesus, anybody else may add it in any other case. The case of John the Baptist however affords a parallel to that of Jesus, for he is spoken of in exactly the same words only a few verses previous to the verse under discussion. The fifteenth verse of the chapter entitled Mary runs thus : وَسَلِّمْ عَلَيْهِ يَوْمَ وُلِدَ وَيَوْمَ يَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ يُبْعَثُ حَيًّا which means "And peace on him the day he was born, and the day he shall die, and the day he shall be raised to life." Therefore the death and resurrection of John the Baptist stand exactly on the same basis as that of Jesus Christ. The fact is that in this matter, in dying and then being raised to life, all human beings are the equals of Jesus.

In support of the same contention, Dr. Chattopadhyaya produces another verse, viz., iii : 48, which says إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنِي مَتُوفِينِي وَارْفَعْنِي إِلَيْكَ "O Jesus, I will cause thee to die and take thee up to Myself." From this he concludes that Jesus died on the cross, and then becoming alive went up to heaven. As regards the first of these points, viz., death on the cross, it is plainly denied in iv : 156, which says : وَمَا صَلَّبُوهُ that is "they (the Jews) did not crucify him,"

in other words, he did not die on the cross. The two verses read together show that Jesus did not die on the cross but that he did die a natural death afterwards. The second point is the *rafa'* of Jesus which really means exalting the dignity but which is translated here as taking up to God. But whatever the word may mean, it does not mean that Jesus' body, with or without life in it, was taken up to heaven or to God, for the Holy Quran says in the plainest words that all those who are born shall remain on earth, shall die in it and shall be raised from it; see vii: 24. Again Jesus is not the only man whose *rafa'* (taking up or exaltation) is spoken of in the Holy Quran. Regarding another prophet Idris it is said: *وَرَفَعْنَاهُ مَكَانًا عَلِيًّا* "and We took him up to a place on high" (xix: 58). Another person whose name is not mentioned in the Holy Quran is thus spoken of: *وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنَاهُ بِهَا* "Had We pleased, We had certainly thereby taken him up, but he crouched to the earth and followed his own lust" (vii: 175). This verse makes the meaning of "taking up" or *rafa'* very clear. In xxxv: 11 it is said *وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ* "And (the worker of) the righteous deed, God takes him up." According to this verse every one who works righteous deeds is taken up to God. Therefore *rafa'* is by no means a peculiarity of Jesus. By taking up is meant the taking up of the soul and not of the lifeless or living body and this is also what is meant by the taking up of Jesus.

To be continued.

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Notes and Comments.

The Gospel of Barnabas.

A good deal of jubilation is displayed in Christian papers over the publication by the Clarendon Press of an English translation of the Italian manuscript of the Gospel of Barnabas. Canon Ragg contributes a lengthy article on this Gospel to the October number of *The East and the West* under the heading "The Muhammadan Gospel of Barnabas," his reason for dubbing it Muhammadan being that he considers that unlike other apocryphal and spurious Gospels which were written by Christians, the Gospel of Barnabas is the work of a Muhammadan—a Christian renegade. He writes:—

“ We have spoken of it as a fraud and suggested a comparison with those literary hoaxes that were not by any means infrequent in the later period of the Renaissance. But the work is too big, too solid, and with all its defects too good, to be classed with the trivial products which an over-exuberant brain may have found a safety-valve for excessive literary vitality. It has its serious aspect and serious aim. Showing as it does a greater and more detailed knowledge of the Christian Bible than of the Koran, it is most probably the work of a Christian renegade; and represents, so far as may be conjectured, his attempt to justify his change of religion, if not to his own conscience, at any rate to the consciousness of his former co-religionists. There may be in it also a touch of sincere endeavour to help his new friends of the Crescent to understand a little more sympathetically the out-lines of the creed in which he himself had been brought up, and to deepen in them the respect and esteem already inculcated in the Koran for ‘Issa,’ son of Mary, the greatest of all the prophets of God, with the exception of Muhammad himself. The basis of the book (as we have remarked above) is the authentic story of the earthly mission of Jesus Christ as narrated in the four canonical Gospels; and this Muhammadan Gospel not only relates all the chief miracles there attributed to the prophet of Nazareth, but adds at least two others of its own devising—a miraculous acceleration of the harvest at Nain and a repetition of the traditional miracle of Joshua. This latter, by the way, betrays in its context that reckless disregard of proportion which so clearly distinguishes the Apocryphal Gospels from the canonical. The most stupendous of all miracles upon nature is performed simply to attest the truth of a not very important narrative that is being repeated!

“ The character of Jesus is depicted throughout as worthy of the highest admiration and reverence, his mission and his revelation as of Divine origin; his birth as miraculous, his path as attended by angelic helpers and monitors, his departure from earth as accompanied by supernatural phenomena. But he is repeatedly made to deny all claim to Divinity or even Messiahship, and to repudiate proffered worship; and predictions are put into his mouth of the future advent of Muhammad, the true Messiah and the ‘Messenger of God’ *par excellence*.”

The only reason for calling it the work of a Christian convert to Islam is that prophecies of the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad are met with in it. While postponing a detailed review of this book for some future issue, we would suggest that this is a very flimsy argument for considering the work as the fraud of a Christian renegade. Prophecies of the advent of the Holy Prophet are met with in the canonical Gospels also, especially the Gospel of St. John, and in the books of the prophets comprised in the collection which is known as the Old Testament.

It must, however, be borne in mind that the Gospel of Barnabas was known in the earlier days of Christianity but it is alleged to have been lost afterwards, and Canon Ragg, notwithstanding the strictures passed against this gospel, admits that the book now published may contain the lost *Evangelium Barnabe* wholly or in part. As he says :—

“ The ‘Gospel of Barnabas’ is indeed too late in date and too modern in character to be of direct interest to students as an ‘Apocryphal Gospel’ ; but it is just conceivable that between its covers there may lurk in entirety, in substance, or in fragment, the famous *Evangelium Barnabe* mentioned among books to be avoided by the faithful in an orthodox list of the sixth century—the so-called *Decretum Gelasii*. ”

The writer also pays a tribute to the Gospel of Barnabas for its high moral conceptions. “ Barnabas has,” he tells us, “solemn and elevated passages to which any devoutly disposed person, Muhammadan or Christian, might listen with advantage.” We quote below one of the two passages quoted by Canon Ragg to justify this statement.—

“ God saith thus to the man who shall faithfully serve Him : ‘I know thy works, that thou workest for me. As I live eternally, thy love shall not exceed my bounty. Because thou servest me as God thy Creator, knowing thyself to be my work, and askest nought of me, save grace and mercy to serve me faithfully ; because thou settest no end to my service, seeing thou desirest to serve me eternally ; even so will I do, for I will reward thee as if thou wert God, mine equal. For not only will I place in thy hands the abundance of paradise, but I will give thee myself as a gift ; so that,

even as thou art fain to be my servant for ever, even so will I make thy wages for ever.' ”

We will deal with the Gospel of Barnabas in some other issue more fully, and we assure our Christian friends that the religion of Islam does not depend for any proof of its truth on this Gospel. We must only consider the book impartially and critically, and if it actually proves to be the fraud of a Christian renegade, the Muhammadans will have no hesitation to condemn it as such. But we fear that the Christian writers have dealt with it too hastily, only because it contains a prophecy of the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, ~~and have not attempted to judge it with a cool and unprejudiced mind.~~

A Conference at Mecca.

A Muhammadan Conference held at Mecca in the year 1899 immediately before the pilgrimage of the year 1316 A. H., is the subject of a paper by Professor Margoliouth in the October number of *The East and the West*. The heading of this paper is “Muhammadan Explanations of the Failure of Muhammadanism.” This conference had twenty-three members in all who came from the following parts of the Muhammadan world: the Euphrates, Damascus, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Cairo, Yemen, Bassorah, Nejd, Medina, Meccah, Tunis, Fez, England, Turkey in Europe, Kurdistan, Tebriz, Tartary, Kazan, Turkey, Afghanistan, India, Sindh, and China. The subject discussed was the decadence of Islam and not the failure of Islam, and we understand that there is a vast difference between the two. The decadence of Islam is a subject which is discussed among the Muhammadans everywhere, and the Conference at Mecca in this respect has no peculiar distinction except in so far that the time of the conference being immediately before the pilgrimage season, it included among its members persons of different nationalities who had gathered at Mecca to perform the pilgrimage. And what does the decadence of Islam mean? It means only this that the Muhammadans have fallen from the greatness to which they had attained by walking in the path pointed out to them by the Holy Prophet. That this was the question which the Muhammadan Conference at Mecca had before it is clear to any body who reads the minutes of the various sittings of the conference which are

contained in an Arabic pamphlet entitled the *Ummul Qura*. The following extract from the secretary's speech is taken from Professor Margoliouth's paper and it shows that what the conference discussed was the departure of Muhammadans from the true Islamic principles which their prophet had taught them and plans to bring them back to those principles.

"The weakness of our characters is to be accounted for by yet another important cause, connected with women—I mean their being left ignorant, unlike what was the case with our ancestors, when women were to be found like A'isha, Mother of the Believers, with whom God be pleased, from whom we have received half our theological knowledge. So, too, there were hundreds of women in the time of the companions of the Prophet and the Epigone, who recited traditions, and were authorities on points of Law, not to mention thousands who possessed knowledge and composed verses. The existence of these women at the commencement of Islam is a convincing argument, sufficient to refute those who hold that ignorance is the best safeguard for a woman's chastity—not to mention the fact that no proof can be adduced for the supposition that knowledge leads to looseness of morals, and ignorance to strictness. For if knowledge render a woman more capable of sinning, ignorance will give her greater boldness. The mischief produced by female ignorance and its evil effects on the character of the children, both male and female, are matters that are obvious and require no exposition. Only its evil effect on the character of the husband is not quite so conspicuous, and may need some elucidation.

"Men have a natural affection for their wives, a tendency to be influenced by their moral qualities, the contrary of this is only imagined by such a man as has been cajoled by his wife into the belief that she is a poor weak thing, completely subject to his will, whereas in fact she holds the reins, and can guide him whither she chooses; or to put it otherwise, into the belief that he is the leader and she the follower, whereas the truth perceived by all around, though unperceived by the husband himself, is that she follows him in the capacity of driver, not driven. The astuteness of women has been most adequately gauged by the Islamic code, which prescribed the veil and the seclusion of the harem in order to restrict their

power, and to confine it to the management of the house: the veil, to the extent of not displaying their ornaments to strange men, and not meeting them in private unnecessarily; and confinement to the house, except for pressing needs—there being no doubt that what is outside these limits opens the door to licentiousness. And these restrictions are enjoined out of consideration for the husbands, and with a view to the proper allocation of the duties of life. The Chinese, whose civilization is the oldest, instituted the forcible compression of girls' feet so as to render it difficult for them to move about, and endanger their honour—which with the Orientals is the primary consideration, whereas Westerns are only concerned with material comforts."

So far from thinking of the failure of Muhammadanism, the conference was alive to the efficiency of the true Islamic principles and discussed the plans by which they could bring the Muhammadans back to act upon those principles by acting upon which they had formerly made a wonderful progress, materially as well as morally. The Christians, who from the present material backwardness of the Muhammadan nations, hastily draw the conclusion of the failure of Islam to raise its adherents to a high standard of progress should cast a glance at the history of Christianity and the Christian people in the thirteenth century after Christ, and they will, we hope, be convinced that their conclusions are illogical. Whatever the present material backwardness of the Muhammadans as compared with the nations which are generally known as Christians, it is a fact that never at any stage of their history they were steeped in such ignorance as the Christians in the Middle Ages when Christianity was as old as Islam is at present. In fact, it cannot be denied that while with the progress of Christianity civilization has decayed and with its deterioration civilization has made progress among the Christian nations, the relations of Islam to civilization have been different. Christianity with a history of ignorance and barbarism extending over centuries cannot declare the failure of Islam merely because the Muhammadan people are materially backward at the present time.

Mormonism and the Bible.

The September number of the *Improvement Era*, an organ of the Mormon sect of Christianity, has an interesting article on "Apocryphal and lost Scriptures," which opens with the following words: "The Bible as accepted by the Christian churches of to-day does not contain all that God has revealed, neither does it contain all that he intends to reveal to his sons and daughters. It is incomplete, therefore it is not a sufficient guide under all conditions, neither was it so intended."

Regarding the differences which have always existed among the Christians as to which books of the Bible are reliable and which not, the writer says:—

"The Protestant churches have differed as much on the question of Apocryphal writings as on 'predestination', 'saving grace,' 'infant and adult baptism,' 'baptism by immersion or otherwise,' and other purely doctrinal matters. Luther, in his German translation, with his accustomed self-reliant judgment, accepts and rejects both the accepted and apocryphal writings at pleasure. He rejected the book of Revelation, calling it neither apostolic nor prophetic. The Epistle of James, he pronounced unapostolic, and an epistle of straw. Coverdale, in his English translation of 1535, separated the apocryphal from the other books, and set them apart at the end of the Old Testament, as not having the same authority. From that time, and up to a comparatively recent period, the recognised apocryphal books were bound up with and formed part of the English Bible, but they are now only to be found in special editions, such as those in use on the reading desks of the Episcopal Church—some parts being occasionally read in their services."

Christianity and Higher Education.

Higher education is not only making Christianity gradually lose the ground in Christian countries, but its spread in the non-Christian countries has also brought to naught the many evangelical efforts of the Christian missionaries. This is due in fact to the incompatibility of the fundamental principles of Christianity with reason. Islam

without any missionary propaganda can claim more converts from among the educated classes in the West than Christianity from among the higher and educated classes in the East though it has at its disposal a huge force of evangelists and untold treasures of wealth. Here is a Bishop's* testimony to the failure of Christian mission work among the educated classes in India :

“ The hopes raised by the initial successes of missionary work among the higher castes in the middle of the last century have not been fulfilled. I very much doubt whether the average for all India would amount to twenty converts a year from this particular class among all denominations of the Christian Church. I believe I am correct in stating that for the last five years the Oxford Mission in Calcutta has not made a single convert, and it is stated in the last report of Cambridge Mission to Delhi that there is not a single case of baptism to show as the result of twenty-five years of College work, while in Madras the converts that can be traced directly or indirectly during the last forty years, to the Christian College, the finest missionary College in India, are a mere handful. The same is true of the S. P. G. Colleges at Trichinopoly and Tanjore, which have long been regarded as among the best pieces of missionary work done by the S. P. G. in South India. I do not think that more than six converts can be traced to either of them for the last twenty years. Looking back then at the experience of the last half century, facts compel us to admit that so far as the building up of the Christian Church in India is concerned, our Mission work among the higher castes and educated classes has failed in the same way and in the same sense as the work of the Apostolic Church failed among the Jews. It is true that a few converts of great value to the Church have been made : but so far as I am able to discern the signs of the times, I can see no evidence of any movement towards Christianity in the higher ranks of Hindu Society at present, nor any hope of it in the immediate future ; on the contrary, the educated classes seem to be further off from the definite acceptance of the Christian faith to-day than they were when I first came out to India twenty-three years ago.”

* The Bishop of Madras in the National Review.