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The Babi Religion, V.

Proof of the Revelations of Bab and Bahauulla.

We now come to the most important question which should be asked concerning any religion, *viz.*, what is the proof that it affords of its truth? In this article we shall deal with the alleged proof of the truth of the revelations of Bab and Bahauulla. We will leave it for the reader to judge how far that proof substantiates the claims advanced, but we may remark at the beginning that the greater the claim the stronger will be the need for a sound proof, and the proof advanced must be of a nature compatible with the nature of the claim. Therefore, while considering the arguments which the Babi religion gives in support of its truth, it must be borne in mind that Bahauulla claimed to be the founder of a new dispensation which not only superseded all previous dispensations, but which was of a nature different from them inasmuch as it was the coming of the great God who sent His prophets in the previous dispensations. If, therefore, earlier religions could prove their truth by miracles or prophecies, these things were not sufficient to prove the truth of the claims of Bahauulla. The case of Bahauulla may for the sake of comparison be likened to that of Jesus Christ, whose miracles, even if believed to have actually been wrought as recorded in the canonical or apocryphal Gospels, do not prove him to have been anything more than a human prophet just like the Israelite prophets who appeared before him, for even the greatest of his

miracles, the raising of the dead to life, was not without a precedent in the earlier history of the Israelite prophets. Nay, more stupendous miracles than those wrought by Jesus are recorded to have been wrought by the earlier prophets. If, therefore, Jesus could not do anything more than what the earlier prophets did, and no display of his power was witnessed which should have showed him to be more than a human prophet, he must on the strength of the evidence which is produced in support of his claims be considered to have been only a prophet like his predecessors and nothing more than this. By introducing this comparison we do not, however, mean to say that credentials are produced on behalf of Bab and Bahaulla which make them out to be God's apostles but which lend no support to their higher claims. The reader will see from what follows that there is no proof worth the name which is produced in support of the claims of the two leaders of Babiism, and that the whole edifice of the extravagant claims of Bab and Bahaulla is built upon illusions arising from subtleties in the meanings of certain words.

Did Ali Muhammad himself give any proof of his mission? We are not aware. We have not the Bayan before us, and the later writings of the Babi sect, including the writings of Bahaulla, do not contain a single reference to any sign shown by the Bab or any prophecy which being announced by him was fulfilled, with the only exception of the prophecy relating to the appearance of Bahaulla, which, however, from its very nature and on account of the uncertainty which attaches to it and which is clearly witnessed in the rejection of Bahaulla by most of the leading Babis of the time, cannot serve as an argument. The Bayan itself, so far as anything is known of it, does not contain any prophecy except the prophecy referred to above, and thus the writings of the Bab as well as those of the Babis fail to give any proof at all of the claims of the founder of Babiism. The only miracle related of him by a zealous disciple is said to be the inefficacy of the shots fired at him at the time of his execution, but even that miracle is obscured by one circumstance. It is said that when orders were passed for his execution, he was suspended by ropes and a regiment of soldiers was ordered to fire upon him. His companion died but none of the shots reached

him and this is magnified into a mighty miracle. The shots, however, cut off the rope by which he was suspended, and in the darkness of the smoke the Bab tried to fly away. But the smoke having soon cleared away, he was detected flying and was brought back to his place where a second volley had the desired effect. There is nothing miraculous in this. The following story of another miracle is related by an American disciple of the Bab:—

“Six months before his departure the Bab sent a sealed epistle to a disciple named Hadji Saliman Khan, instructing him to break the seal only when ‘a grievous sorrow and affliction befell him.’ When the sacrifice of the Bab’s life took place, and the disciple heard the report of the muskets, he knew that this was the event predicted, and broke the seal of the letter. The contents announced that six months from the date of writing the Bab would suffer martyrdom at Tabriz. The date fell exactly on that day. The letter also gave instructions as to the disposition of his body. The disciples went by night to the sentinels who stood guard over the body as it lay in the moat outside of the city walls with the body of a follower who had determined to die with him, bribed these sentinels and bore the bodies away. Shrouded in white silk and placed in a chest, they were later removed to Teheran, and in the recent past, arrangements were made for a shrine and an interment elsewhere.”

There is nothing to vouch the truth of the story or of the sealed letter which, however, it must be remembered, was written, if it was written at all, at the time when Ali Muhammad was being taken for execution, and the alleged prediction may therefore have been nothing more than a surmise. At any rate the unsupported testimony of a single disciple cannot prove the truth of the occurrence to the satisfaction of any reasonable person. The other miracles claimed for the Bab hardly deserve to be called by this name. A great orthodox Mulla is said to have once gone to him in a spirit of animosity to demand some sign which should show his truth, but, it is related, he was so charmed by his eloquence that he at once became a disciple and no more sought a sign. One man is said to have become a convert on seeing the Bab or some of his disciples being persecuted by the public.

These circumstances are related as the miracles of the Bab and as proof of the truth of his revelation.

The only miracle which, however, Ali Muhammad claimed for himself was the Bayan. He claimed that this book which contained the revelations of God sent down to him was miraculous, and that the whole world could not produce the like of a single letter or even jot of it. This claim which was made in imitation of the claim of the Quran has been carried to the extreme of absurdity, for the jots and letters of the Bayan are not different from the ordinary jots and letters. The book itself by no means shows even high literary attainments, and when blunders were pointed out, Ali Muhammad replied that he had ordered letters and words to perform other than their ordinary functions. When Bahauulla made his appearance, he pronounced this "matchless" book to be worthless and declared that the whole of the Bayan was not worth a single verse uttered by him. What beauty or excellence there is in these verses, the reader has seen in the last article.

The *Bahr-ul-Irfan*, a Babi writing, deals at great length with the claims of Ali Muhammad and the proofs thereof. Some of these are worth noting, not for their importance but for their curiosity. The following verses of the Holy Quran are said to refer to Ali Muhammad: "Man asks when is the day of Resurrection? When the eyesight shall be dazzled, and the moon shall be darkened, and the sun and the moon shall be united (in the loss of the light)" (lxxv: 6-8). By the day of Resurrection, it is said, is meant the time of the appearance of Ali Muhammad, though the same author elsewhere tells us that the day of Resurrection in the Holy Quran means the appearance of Bahauulla. But we would not care for this rather insignificant contradiction. The learned author of the *Bahr-ul-Irfan* tells us that Ali Muhammad is mentioned in these verses, by name though a superficial reader may not be able to see this. By "the moon shall be darkened," is meant, we are told, that the Islamic law shall be abrogated, and by "the sun and the moon shall be united," it is meant that a man named Ali Muhammad would make his appearance. The reader need not wonder at this for the sun signifies Muhammad, and the moon Ali, and their uniting indicates that a person of whose name Muhammad and Ali

are the component parts will make his appearance with a new law. Nor should it be considered that the darkening of the moon according to this interpretation must mean the darkening of Ali, for moon in that sentence indicates the Muhammadan law. In fact we are not to follow the significance of the words, but the significance of the words must follow our fancy. The verses quoted above are followed by the following verses in which the ingenious brain of the author of the *Bahr-ul-Irfan* discovers another argument showing that they speak of Ali Muhammad's advent: "On that day man shall cry, 'Where is there a place to flee to'? But in vain—there is no place of refuge: with thy Lord on that day shall be the sole asylum" (lxxv: 10-12). In the last sentence the word Lord, it is argued, stands for Ali Muhammad, and it is reasoned in this manner. The Arabic word for Lord in the original is رب *Rab*, the numerical value of which, according to the *abjad* system in which each letter has a numerical value is 202. Now the numerical value of the word محمد علي (Ali Muhammad) according to the same system is also 202. Hence the logical conclusion that *Rab* in the verse quoted above stands for Ali Muhammad! What argument can be more convincing to a Babi than the argument based on the numerical value of letters! It even needs no ingenious brain to discover such arguments.

The author of the *Bahr-ul-Irfan* is positive as to the uniting of the sun and the moon and the word *Rab* meaning Ali Muhammad in these verses. Now the sun stands for Muhammad and the moon for Ali, while in the same verse the moon stands for the Muhammadan law. It is by no means necessary to draw such arguments only from the verses in which the coming of the judgment day is spoken of. Take the following verse: اقم الصلوة لد لوك الشمس الى غسق ا ليل وقران الفجر ان قران الفجر كان مشهودا ومن ا ليل فتهجد According to the plain interpretation of the words of the verse it is an injunction to the Holy Prophet to say prayers at certain times: "Observe prayer at sunset, till the first darkening of the night, and, the day-break-reading: truly the daybreak-reading hath its witnesses: And watch unto it in a portion of the night: this shall be an excess in thy service; it may be that thy Lord will raise thee to a glorious station" (xvii: 81-82). Thus does Rodwell translate these verses.

But the Babi author of the *Bahr-ul-Irfan* sees the advent of Ali Muhammad clearly spoken of here. According to him the first verse means that prayers according to the Muhammadan law shall be observed to the year 1261 A. H., and that then a new law shall be revealed to mankind and prayers shall be said according to that law. The setting of the sun means the death of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, and the first darkness of the night means the passing away of the time of the law given by the Prophet. The date of the passing away of the Muhammadan law is given in "the darkness of the night" and with the help of the Babi lantern of interpretation we can soon discover it there. The Arabic word for "the darkness of the night" is غسق الليل and we have to discover its numerical value which is 1231 if the words are read as written in the Quran and 1261 if they are read as written by the author of the *Bahr-ul-Irfan*. Hence "the darkness of the night" means the passing away of 1261 lunar years from, not the death of the Holy Prophet, but his Flight. By the help of all these devices we find the year 1261 A. H. as the year in which the Muhammadan law must be abrogated by the law of Ali Muhammad and this brings us to within three years of the time when Ali Muhammad claimed to be the Bab.

In fact, no verse of the Holy Quran when handled by a Babi can refuse to yield the conclusion of the appearance of Ali Muhammad. Take the verses with which the chapter entitled "the Merciful" opens: "The God of mercy has taught thee the Quran, He has created man and has taught him articulate speech"—man here means. Ali Muhammad and articulate speech means his work, the Bayan, for fortunately the Quran uses the word *bayan* to denote articulate speech. "The sun and the moon have each their times"—according to the Babi interpretation this means that the Muhammadan theologians would be thrown into hell for their refusal to accept Ali Muhammad. "And the plants and the trees are bent in adoration"—that is to say, laymen will accept Ali Muhammad. "And the Heaven, He has reared it on high, and He has appointed the Balance" which is equivalent to saying that the heaven of the law of Islam will be taken away and a new law or balance will be given in its place.

The symbols or abbreviations which occur at the commencement

of several chapters are also considered to refer to Ali Muhammad. For instance, the forty-second chapter begins with the five letters, *Ha, mim, ain, sin, qaf*. The author of the *Bahr-ul-Irfan* considers that Ali Muhammad is here mentioned by name: *Ha* and *Mim* standing for Muhammad, *Ain* for Ali, *Sin* for Syed, *Qaf* for *Qaim* this last being one of the titles by which the expected Mahdi is known among the Shiahs, the whole meaning that Syed Ali Muhammad is the expected Mahdi. These examples will, we hope, be sufficient to give the reader an idea of the "proof" of the revelation of Ali Muhammad Bab. In the traditional lore of the Shiahs, however, there is something which lends a colour to the claim of Ali Muhammad, for these traditions are filled with all the wild stories which imagination could invent and such of them as suit the claims of Ali Muhammad are applied to him by his followers. According to these traditions which are sayings of certain Shiah Imams, the Mahdi will be born in Persia, his name will be a combination of the names of Muhammad and Ali, he will come with a new law and he will live for seven years after he claims to be the Mahdi. If all these signs are to be found in Ali Muhammad, there are thousands of others similar to these to be met with in the same traditional lore which contradict his claims. In the more reliable sources of prophecy, however, there is nothing which should satisfy any sensible person of the truth of those claims.

The claims of Bahaulla have, however, a greater prominence in the Babi religion, and it is upon these that the whole interest of the Babi religion centres at present. The greatest stress is in this case laid upon the calculation of time according to the Biblical prophecies. The twelfth chapter of Daniel affords the best material for calculation. The "thousand two hundred and ninety days" of the eleventh verse of that chapter are taken as indicating the 1290 lunar years from the beginning of the Muhammadan dispensation, and an attempt is made to make the time when thus calculated coincide with year in which Bahaulla advanced his claims. The lunar year is taken as underlying all Biblical calculations and this is no doubt true. The 1290 lunar years are then converted into solar years and the result is added to 622 which is the year of the Christian era corresponding to the commencement of the Muhammadan

era. This gives us the year 1873 according to the prophecy, but Bahauulla advanced his claim in 1863, and the ten years must be accounted for. The defect is sought to be remedied by the assertion that the foundation of the Muhammadan dispensation was laid ten years before the commencement of the Muhammadan era. If this were true, the year of the prophecy would on the calculation adopted correspond with the year of Bahauulla's appearance, but the fact is that the flight of the Holy Prophet to Medina, which is the starting time of the Muhammadan era, took place thirteen years after the starting of his ministry. This calculation brings us to the year 1860, when Bahauulla was still lying content with a minor position in the Babi church. Therefore all that these prophecies can be taken to indicate is a rough and not an exact calculation of the appearance of a messenger in the latter days.

The twelfth chapter of the Revelations is brought in for the support of the conclusions derived from the twelfth chapter of Daniel. All these explanations are, of course, given not by Bahauulla himself but by his disciples. The "woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev. 12: 1) is said to be the symbol of the Muhammadan religion, the sun being considered to be "the emblem of Persia," the moon to be "the emblem of Turkey," and the twelve stars to be twelve Imams according to the Shiah sect of Islam. Perhaps an explanation could be easily suggested of the dragon and its heads and horns but no such attempt is made. The 1260 days of the sixth verse are then taken and reduced to solar years, and the time is thus made to correspond with the year 1844 of the Christian era, taking the commencement of the 1260 lunar years in this case from the flight of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. This was to mark the departing time of the sceptre of the Judean lawgiver, and the coming of the Lord himself, which is inferred from the tenth verse which says: "Now is come salvation, and strength and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ." In the 14th verse "a time, times and half a time" are also considered to indicate the 1260 years of the sixth verse, the same expression being used also in Daniel 12: 7. The method of interpretation adopted is this: Every nineteen years the moon completes a cycle. The square of nineteen is 361. But as the

cycle consists of nineteen years less a slight fraction, one year is dropped and thus there remains a cycle of 360 years. This is in the language of the Bible "a time." "Times" means two such times and thus stands for 720 years and half-a-time is equivalent to saying 180 years. These three added together give us 1260 years. These 1260 years are considered to refer to the time of the appearance of the Bab, the forerunner of Bahauulla, and the 1290 days or years of Dan. 12 : 11 to the appearance of Bahauulla himself. According to this calculation Bahauulla should have declared himself thirty years after the Bab, but actually there was only a distance of nineteen years between the two, and the elaborate time-plan thus fails altogether to support the claims of the Babi religion.

These interpretations of the Biblical prophecies or whatever they are savour too much of the Christian methods of interpretation to need the explanation that they are not the work of Bahauulla but of an American follower of his. It is a fact that the whole Christian world considers the signs of the second advent of Jesus Christ to have been all fulfilled, and various attempts have been made to calculate the exact time of his coming. One interpreter gave the time of his appearance as the year 1868 of the Christian era. When that date passed away without anything new coming to light another work on the interpretation of Biblical prophecies relating to the second advent of Christ gave the exact date of his appearance to be 1873, while a third work calculating time on the basis of cycles appeared with the announcement that the coming of the Messiah could not be later than the year 1898. It is the fruits of the labours of these workers that Isabella D. Brittingham the writer to whom I have referred above, now presents to us as proofs of the truth of the revelation of Bahauulla, making in their conclusions the slight changes that are needed to adapt them to the time of Bahauulla.

That the Babi religion could win thousands of proselytes in civilized America is no doubt a matter for wonder, but when we see the proofs which are convincing to an American mind the wonder ceases. In Isabella D. Brittingham's pamphlet on the Babi religion the interpretations of the Biblical prophecies are followed by the following proofs which the author tells us have been selected out of hundreds :—

"Out of hundreds of proofs we select a few which give the Master Abdul Baha to us as 'He who is to rebuild Jerusalem.'

"In Daniel, 7th chapter, beginning with the 9th verse to the 14th inclusive, we find the following: 'I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool, his throne was like the fiery flame and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him; thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand stood before him; the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

" 'I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spoke: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame.

" 'As concerning the rest of the beasts they had their dominion taken away; yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.

" 'I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

" 'And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom that all people, nations and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom which shall not be destroyed.'

" 'This is the vision of the Book of the Ages 'which is unsealed.' And the son receives from the father an everlasting kingdom and dominion."

Such are the *conclusive proofs* of the truth of Bahauulla's revelation. It may however be asked, Has not Bahauulla himself given any proofs of his truth? We must answer this question in the negative. In the whole stock of his writings there is no appeal to reason, but they are throughout an appeal to the sentiments. He no doubt asserts on several occasions that he has come with signs, and in one place says that "the God who spoke to Moses on the mount Sinai has manifested himself with the mighty signs against which all thos

that are in heaven and earth are absolutely powerless" (*Kitab-ul-Aqdas*, p. 101), but these signs must have been like the proofs given above, for we find no trace of any sign in his books. There is no doubt that like the prophets of yore we find him repeatedly declaring that ~~distress and woe were about to overtake all those who rejected him,~~ and that happiness would be the lot of those who had accepted him, but these threats and hopes remain unfulfilled to this day. It is true that similar warnings and hopes were given by the Holy Prophet Muhammad to those who opposed and persecuted him and those who accepted his mission respectively, but while the threats and hopes given by him came out to be true in his life-time and before his eyes, the threats and hopes given by Bab and Bahaulla have remained unfulfilled. In fact, the threats and hopes held out by the prophets of God are not empty denunciations or declarations, but they are really warnings of ill to befall a person or glad tidings of the good in store for him. A consideration of the question, what is the mission of a prophet? will make this point clearer. The mission of every prophet of God may be briefly stated to be this, that he claims to show the way by walking in which men can have eternal happiness and by avoiding which they shut the doors of salvation against themselves and thus lead themselves to a life of pain. Now these assertions are such that a false prophet can share them with the true, and hence the first great need of humanity is a plain criterion which should distinguish the true claimants from the false ones. The criterion according to the Holy Quran is this that the righteous servants of God who follow the prophet are given beforehand the glad tidings of triumph over their enemies and Divine blessings even in this life, while the evil-doers who reject and persecute the righteous one are clearly warned that failures and adversity will soon overtake them if they persist in their rejection and persecution of the messenger of God, and then the promise of triumph and blessings for the one and the warning of failure and adversity in store for the other are brought to fulfilment in their life time, their fulfilment thus serving as a sign and being a clear indication of the truth of the promises and warnings of eternal happiness and life of pain respectively to the two parties. This is the criterion which distinguishes the true prophet from a false claimant: they both

give the same promises and warnings to their followers and opponents, but while the hopes and threats held out by the one are realized soon, those of the other turn out to be empty threats and vain hopes.

Judging Bahauulla by this criterion we find that he cannot show the signs of a true prophet. He calls his religion as "a blessing for the righteous and an adversity for the evil-doers," and "a mercy for those who accept and a punishment for those who reject and turn aside." Times without number he invokes evil upon those who rejected him and the blessings of God upon those who accepted him, but his invocations were all without fruit. He repeatedly cursed his opponents but his curses had no effect, thus showing that what he spoke was not from God but the word of his own mouth. In the *Kitab-ul-Aqdas* and other writings he again and again assures his friends that their persecutors will soon be brought to disgrace: "Beware that they (the opponents) are of those who shall be brought to disgrace;" "Blessed are those who accept me and woe to every denier;" "woe to those who have left me;" "woe to those who turn aside;" "May God curse them;" "May God do battle with them;" "Woe to those who neglect these days and their fruits, they will soon cry bitterly for and lament what they have done and they will not find any soul that shall comfort them: happiness is the lot of the truthful ones who have become triumphant with the truth, happiness is the lot of those who know because they have recognised the right path, happiness is the lot of those who have found joy;" "Blessed be the women who are barren (because they will not give birth to offspring that will reject Bahauulla) and woe to the women who suckle babes (because those babes will on denying Bahauulla see adversity and evil days)."

The strange interpretations of the Quranic words which are considered as proving Bahauulla's truth have already been referred to in considering his claims. It is only on such interpretations that the Babi religion depends. The main argument of the truth of the Babi religion is, however, considered to be the firmness and perseverance shown by its adherents under the persecution of its opponents. Now mere firmness under persecutions is not a proof of the truth of the principles held by the persecuted party. The Jews have as a people shown great perseverance in remaining firm in their religion

under the persecutions of the Christians, but that does not prove that the religious beliefs of the Jews were true and should be accepted by the whole world. The Protestants were tortured and burned by the Roman Catholics, while the Roman Catholics in their turn suffered persecutions at the hands of the Protestants, and hence tenacity to one's principles under persecutions is no ground of the truth of the principles. Perseverance no doubt argues for the truth of the principles, but that is only under certain circumstances. In the case of the Babis, it appears moreover that they were not only the persecuted but also the persecutors. The Babis fought under the impression that as the Bab was the Promised Mahdi, they would soon subdue their enemies and be the lords of the land. But they were vanquished and took the consequences of their own deeds. No one but the Babis themselves are to blame for these persecutions. When their intentions became once clear, the suspicion against them could not be easily removed, and it required the greatest efforts on their part to assure the authorities that they no more entertained evil designs against the Government. Their troubles were due more to political reasons than religious persecution and accordingly their sufferings cannot serve as an argument of the truth of the principles held by them.

While dealing with the proofs of Bahau'lla's mission, we cannot neglect the *Bahr-ul-Irfan* which is the most important Babi writing that undertakes to give proofs of the revelations of Bab and Bahau'lla. Its remarks as to the proof of Bab's revelation have already been considered and now we shall consider what it has to say upon the claims of Bahau'lla. In the first place, the Bible is largely quoted as containing prophecies of the advent of Bahau'lla. Some of these are quoted here and I hope that after reading them, the reader would not feel anxious to see the rest as they are even more absurd than those quoted. Hab. 3:3 is first quoted: "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise." Dan. 2:2 is also considered to prophesy Bahau'lla's advent: "And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." Dan.

24 : 23 and 25 : 6-9 are also quoted "Then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously; " " And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the less well-refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall be taken away from off all the earth : for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God ; we have waited for him and he will save us ; this is the Lord ; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

Numerous other quotations of the same kind are given. Their application to Bahaualla cannot, we think, be denied by a Christian who himself follows the same method in the application of Bible expressions to Jesus Christ. In the New Testament, however, only one prophecy is claimed for Bahaualla " And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and last " (Rev. 22 : 12, 13.)

A vast number of prophecies is referred to as being met with in the Islamic religious literature, and with the method of interpretation adopted by Bahaualla and his followers, there is no doubt that anything can be converted into a prophecy referring to the advent of Bahaualla. We have already shown when considering the claims of Bahaualla that almost every verse of the Holy Quran speaking of the day of Resurrection is interpreted by the followers of Bab as foretelling the advent of Bahaualla or sometimes of Bab as shown in this article. The word *Rabb* (Lord) is also interpreted sometimes as meaning Bahaualla and sometimes as meaning Ali Muhammad. Besides all these alleged references, there is said to be a clear prophecy of the advent of Bahaualla in the first verse of the seventeenth chapter of the Holy Quran which runs thus : "Glory to Him who transported His servant on a certain night from the sacred temple at Mecca to the temple

that is more remote whose precincts We have blessed that We might show him of Our signs." The reader may ask in surprise, what has this verse to do with a prophecy relating to the advent of Bahauulla? The Babi author interprets it thus. The verse speaks of the "temple that is more remote" which means the temple at Jerusalem. Then the verse says that the precincts of that temple have been blessed. This according to the author of the *Bahr-ul-Irfan* does not mean the precincts of the temple but the precincts of the city of Jerusalem where the temple is situated. And then by a strange stretch of fancy Acre or Akka, the place of Bahauulla's imprisonment, is suggested as the place indicated in the word "precincts," and thus a prophecy for the advent of Bahauulla is made out. In support of this fanciful interpretation, some traditions are mentioned in which the excellence of Akka is spoken of. The source of these traditions is not indicated and accordingly we are unable to discuss their trustworthiness, but the mere circumstance that a certain tradition praises Akka does not justify the extravagant allegations of the Babi writer. Akka or Acre is an ancient city of great importance and it is spoken of also in the Bible. During the crusades, Akka was a great centre of action, and its ultimate conquest by the Muhammadans drove the crusaders from the land of Palestine, and if there is any reference to it contained in a trustworthy tradition, it must be to these events which played such an important part in the history of Islam.

The signs of the approach of the day of Judgment as mentioned in the Holy Quran are also considered as having been all fulfilled. The explanations given are not in all cases of the same nature. The first sign is the appearance of the *dabbat-ul-ard*, and it is said that Ali, the fourth caliph, spoke of himself as the *dabbat-ul-ard*. The coming of the Gog and the Magog is not explained but it is said that it has an esoteric meaning under it. The falling down of stars is another sign and this is said to have taken place in the year 1283 A.H. in the month of Rajjab when a fall of more than a hundred thousand meteors is said to have been witnessed within about an hour. It is also stated that the followers of the Zend look upon this event as an indication of the birth of Behram. Then there is the great shaking of the earth before the day of

judgment. The earth in this case means, it is alleged, the soil of the hearts of the people. The rolling up of heaven like a scroll is interpreted as meaning the abrogation of the heavenly law in force at the time, *i.e.*, the Muhammadan Law. The blowing of blast on the trumpet means the breathing of spiritual life into the spiritually dead. By saying that the mountains shall be crumbled, it is meant that the priests and the theologians will be discomfited by Bahauulla.

Accepting all these interpretations to be true, they show nothing more than this that the signs of the advent of a messenger promised to appear in the latter days have all been fulfilled and that therefore the present is the time of the appearance of the messenger. They do not show Bab or Bahauulla to be that messenger. To establish their claims it must be proved that signs were shown by them. Such proof, however, we do not meet with anywhere in the Babi literature, and in its absence a seeker after truth is compelled to reject their claims. The only sign of Bahauulla that is related in Babi writings is the downfall or destruction of certain monarchs to whom Bahauallah addressed letters or tablets containing the "Announcement of His perfect presence, declaring that for the sake of His Eternal Love to His creatures He had turned His footsteps from the invisible to the visible world, and veiled His Splendor in the body of the dust." Some of the imperial "creatures" of Bahauulla are said to have received his message respectfully and they were saved while others are said to have treated it contemptuously and they met with ruin. It needs hardly to be added that these assertions are as far off from being *proofs* of the truth of the revelation of Bahauulla as the fanciful explanations of the words of the Holy Quran and the Bible referred to above.

Christ in the Holy Quran, II.

9. The power of creating and of quickening the dead.

Dr. Chattopadhyaya lays great stress on this point. He admits that the power of healing was, and is even now, claimed by others, but,

he says, "the power of creating and of quickening the dead is essentially Divine, and, therefore, must be regarded as an indubitable testimony to the Divinity of Christ." As regards the miracles of healing, he writes: "The extraordinary powers of healing the blind and curing the leper have been claimed by several thaumaturgists, ancient and modern, European as well as Asiatic, amongst others by Appolonius of Tyana who was probably a contemporary of Christ; but," he adds, "the power of creating a living animal out of inorganic dust and of raising the dead back into life as in the case of Lazarus, have been attributed to Christ and Christ alone." Hence though in his conclusion Dr. Chattopadhyaya considers the miracle of healing as evidence of Jesus' Divinity, we have not taken up that point, for according to the writer's own admission, uninspired persons and even the opponents of Jesus could perform similar miracles, and it is not reasonable to suppose that miracles the performance of which did not require even inspiration from God could entitle a person to claim Divinity. Hence of the miracles of Jesus narrated in the Holy Quran we have to consider only those miracles which according to Dr. Chattopadhyaya show his power of creating and of quickening the dead.

Before entering upon this discussion, I would draw the reader's attention to two important principles laid down in the Holy Quran in the clearest words. The first of these is that no one can create things like the creation of God. This is taught in the following verses: *وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَخْلُقُونَ شَيْئًا وَهُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ أَمْواتٌ غَيْرَ أَحْيَاءِ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُونَ (الحل)* which Rolwell translates as meaning: "While the gods whom they call on beside God, create nothing, but are themselves created: Dead are they, lifeless! and they know not when they shall be raised," (xvi: 20-22). This verse shows that all those who are taken for gods, among whom Jesus according to his description in the Holy Quran must be included, never created anything. It also shows that no one besides God can create anything. This verse particularly refers to men and not to stone idols, for stones shall not be raised to life. Another verse says: *أَمْ جَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ خَلَقُوا كَخَلْقِهِ فَتَشَابَهَ الْإِنْسَانُ لِقَوْلِهِمْ قُلِ اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ (الرعد)*

"Or have they given associates to God who have created as He has created, so that their creation appears to them like His? Say: God is the sole creator of all things: He is the one, the powerful" (xiii: 17). Here also it is affirmed that no creation like the creation of God can be made by anybody else but that God alone is the creator of all things that are in heaven or earth. In many other places the same principle, *viz.*, that no one besides God can create anything which is like that which God has created, is stated in clear words, as, for instance, in xxxv: 3 where it is asked "هل من خالق غير الله" "Is there any one besides God who is the creator of anything," and thus creation by all others is emphatically negated. It should also be borne in mind that creation by all persons who have been taken for gods by any people, is distinctly and particularly negated, and it is in this category that the Holy Quran includes Jesus.

The other principle referred to above is that the dead cannot be brought back to life in this worlds. I shall quote only three verses in support of this. In xxiii: 101, 102, it is said: *حتى اذا جاء احد هم الموت قال رب ارجعون لعلى اعمل صالحا فيما تركت كلا انها كلمة هو قائلها ومن وراهم برزخ الى يوم يبعثون* "Until when death overtakes one of them, he says, 'Lord, send me back again to life, haply I shall do good in the world which I have left.' By no means shall this be. It is a word which he says (but it will not be attended to), and behind them is *Barzakh* (a barrier) until the day (of judgment) when they shall be raised again." This verse states the Divine law as to the dead in general terms, and shows that the souls of the dead remain in what is called *Barzakh* and they are never sent back to this world. In this state every person must remain till the day of judgment when there will be a general resurrection of the dead. Another verse bearing on this point occurs in the chapter entitled "the Prophets." It says: *وحرام على قرية اهلكناها انهم لا يرجعون* "And there is a ban on (the dwellers of) every abode of men of whom we have taken away the lives that they shall not return to life again" (xxi: 95).

This verse emphatically forbids the returning to life of those who are dead, but one or two points require to be explained more

fully. The verses which follow this verse run thus: "Until Gog and Magog have had a way opened for them, and they shall hasten from every high land, and this sure promise draws on. And lo! the eyes of the infidels shall stare amazedly; and they shall say, 'Oh, our misery! of this were we careless, nay we were unjust.' Verily ye and what ye worship beside God shall be fuel for hell: Ye shall go down into it." The verse quoted above is sometimes misinterpreted owing to what follows it. Now the whole read together amounts to this that there is a decided prohibition against the returning to life of those who are dead until a certain time, the approach of which is indicated by saying that Gog and Magog will spread in the earth. But the spread of the Gog and Magog is one of the signs of the approach of the judgment day, which is the day of the resurrection of all the dead according to the Holy Quran and the verses which follow as quoted above show clearly by speaking of hell and of the infidels being cast into it that the day of general resurrection is meant here. The verse, therefore, really means that there is a ban on all men whose lives have been taken away by God that they shall not be brought back to life till the day of resurrection, and hence it expresses only more emphatically what is said in the verse quoted first.

Another point to be cleared in this verse is whether the ban of not being sent back to this life lies only upon the people whose cities are destroyed by God on account of their iniquities or upon all those whom death has taken away from this world of the living. Various considerations show that the verse speaks of all those who are dead irrespective of their deeds or the manner in which their death is brought about. The word قرية *Qarya* means a town or a village, that is to say, any place where men have settled together. The root from which it is derived means the entertaining of a guest and an abode of men is called a *qarya* because there the traveller is sure to be entertained as a guest. Hence every abode of men is a *qarya*. Then there is the word هلاك *Ihlak* which has given rise to much misunderstanding. *Ihlak* does not necessarily mean the bringing about of destruction or a punishment for iniquities. According to Lane's Lexicon, the word هلك *halk* conveys the following significances: "He destroyed, made an end of, caused to perish or come to an end, made

away, did away with, or brought to naught him, or it; took away his life." Again by the word *qarya* are meant the dwellers of the *qarya* and not its buildings as the words "انهم لا يرجعون" That they are not brought back to life" show, and the use of the name of a place for its dwellers is very frequent. Hence by the *قريّة* in this verse is meant the taking away of the lives of those who dwell in any abode of men. The word *ihlak* in the sense here referred to is frequently used in the Holy Quran; it is used for taking away the life of Jesus Christ and his mother (v: 19), of the prophet Joseph (xl: 36), and of the Holy Prophet Muhammad himself (lxvii: 28).

There is a saying of the Holy Prophet, however, which settles conclusively that the prohibition against returning to life in this world after a man is dead is of a general application. There is a tradition which is considered trustworthy by a large number of traditionists, among them by Nisai and Ibn Maja, which runs thus: عن جابر بن عبد الله قال لقيني رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال يا جابر مالي اراكم منكسرا قلت يا رسول الله استشهد ابي وترك عيالا ودينا فقال الا ابشرى ما لقي الله به اباك قال بلى قال ما كلم الله احد الا من وراء حجاب و احيا اباك فكلمه كفا حاك قال يا عبدى تمن على اعطى قال يا رب تعييزى فا قتل فيك ثانية قال الرب تعا لى قد سبق منى انهم لا يرجعون Jabir son of Abdulla said: The messenger of God, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, met me one day and said: 'O, Jabir! Why is it that I see thee dejected.' I replied, 'O Messenger of God, my father suffered martyrdom and he has left behind him a large family and debt.' He said, 'May I give thee the glad tidings of what God has given to thy father? Almighty God speaks to His servants from behind a screen, but He spoke to thy father in his presence and told him to ask anything of Him that He might grant it to him. Thy father said, 'O Lord give me life again that I may suffer martyrdom in Thy cause a second time.' The mighty Lord said, 'Verily the word has gone forth from Me that they (*i.e.*, those whose lives have once been taken away) shall not return to life again." It is to the concluding words of this tradition that I want to draw the reader's attention. The words in which the Divine law of prohibition against the returning to life of

the dead is mentioned are انهم لا يرجعون which are exactly the words of the verse under discussion, and hence the reference in the words of the tradition, "verily the word has gone forth from Me," is to the verse we are discussing which expresses the same law in the same words.

The Divine law that the dead shall not return to life in this world is thus clearly laid down by the Holy Quran. I would quote only one more verse from the Holy Book in support of this. In xxxix: 43, we are told when souls are sent back and when not: لا الله يتوفى الا نفس حين موتها والذى لم تمت فى مدامها فيمسيك التى قضى عليها الموت ويرسل الاخرى الى اجل مسمى (الزمر) "God taketh souls unto Himself at the time of their death; and during their sleep those who do not die: and He retaineth those on which He hath passed a decree of death, but sendeth the others back till a time that is fixed." Here it is clearly affirmed that Almighty God never sends back to this world the soul of him on whom He has passed the decree of death.

These preliminary remarks have been made to enable the reader to understand the nature of miracles ascribed to Jesus Christ in the Holy Quran. When we interpret a book it is our duty to interpret it in such a manner that we may not be guilty of setting one part of it against another. Now take the miracles of Jesus as described in the Holy Quran. Dr. Chattopadhyaya says that according to the Quran Jesus had the power of creating and of quickening the dead. But the Holy Quran as shown above tells us that none besides God has the power of creating and that nothing in the world has been created by anybody except God, and that as regards the dead there is a strict prohibition against their returning to life in this world. What is meant then by the creating of things like birds from clay and the raising of the dead to life as attributed to Jesus in the Holy Quran? We take the latter miracle first because of its greater importance. In the Holy Quran, Almighty God says addressing Jesus واذ تعبى الموتى باذننى "And when thou didst raise the dead with My permission." But we have already shown that the Holy Quran lays down a strict prohibition against the coming to life of the dead in this world. Hence the verse in question cannot signify the restoring to life of those who are dead physically. But

then the question is, if the Holy Quran mentions the raising of the dead in any other sense, and if it does, whether that meaning is applicable here. There is ample evidence that the Quran speaks again and again of the spiritually dead and their being raised to spiritual life through the prophets of God. I will quote only a few examples. In vi: 122 we read *او من كان ميتا فاحيينه وجعلنا له نورا* "Shall he who was dead, and whom We have raised to life and for whom We have ordained a light whereby he may walk among men, be like him whose likeness is that of one in the darkness whence he cannot come forth." In this verse the dead man who is quickened signifies the person who was spiritually dead because of his unbelief, and his quickening indicates the breathing into him of a new life which is the fruit of his faith. Again in viii: 24 we have: *يا ايها الذين امنوا استجيبوا لله* "O ye faithful! make answer to the call of God and His apostle when he calls you to that which brings you to life." Here the Holy Prophet, Muhammad, is spoken of as bringing to life his followers or those who believed in Him, and as before it is spiritual life that is meant and not physical life. Again, take xxvii: 82,83 where it is said speaking of the Holy Prophet: *انك لا تسمع الموتى وتسمع الصم والدا والاولاد برين وما انت بهادى العمى عن ضلالتهم ان تسمع الا من يؤمن باياتنا فهم مسلمون* "Verily thou shalt not make the dead to hear, neither shalt thou make the deaf to hear the call, when they turn their backs upon thee; neither canst thou be the guide of those who will remain blind out of their errors: verily thou canst not make to hear but those who believe in Our signs and these are the Muslims." The dead, the deaf and the blind spoken of in these verses are, as the context clearly shows, the spiritually dead, deaf and blind, and the dead and the deaf are even spoken of as turning their backs upon the Holy Prophet. Here are a few more verses of the chapter entitled the *Fatir* bearing upon the same subject: *ومن تزكى فانما يتزكى لنفسه والى الله المصير وما يستوى الا عمى والبصير ولا الظلمات ولا النور ولا الظل ولا الحرور وما يستوى الا حياء ولا اموات ان الله يسمع من يشاء وما انت بمسمع من فى القبور*

"And whoever purifies himself, he purifies himself only for his

own good and to God shall all return. And the blind and the seeing are not alike, neither darkness and light, nor the shade and the heat, nor are the living and the dead alike ! God indeed shall make whom He will to hearken, but thou canst not make those who are in their graves to hearken " (xxxv : 19-21). It is clear that by the seeing and the living are meant those who purified themselves by believing in the Holy Prophet, and by the blind and the dead those who refused to follow the guidance and thus have spiritual life breathed into them. It is remarkable that here the spiritually dead are even described as being in their graves.

These few verses are sufficient, I think, to convince the reader that the Holy Quran frequently speaks of the dead and their being raised to life in a spiritual sense, the words used being exactly the same as are used in the case of Jesus. In fact, having laid down the clear and emphatic law that those who are physically dead cannot return to life in this world, the Holy Quran could not contradict itself by saying that the dead did return to life. It will become clear to anybody who studies the Holy Quran with a little reflection that the return to life of the physically dead is spoken of only in one case and that is in connection with the day of resurrection, and that in all cases where the raising to life of the dead through the messengers of God is spoken of, only the breathing of a spiritual life is meant, and the dead spoken of in these cases are only those who are spiritually dead because of their unbelief. Thus there are two kinds of the dead spoken of in the Holy Quran of whom it is said that they are raised to life : the actually dead of whom it is said that God will raise them to life on the day of resurrection but who shall on no account be sent back to life in this world, and the spiritually dead of whom it is stated that such of them as God wills are raised to life in this world through the potency of faith and the instrumentality of the prophets of God. Bearing this distinction in mind there remains no difficulty to find out what kind of dead are meant in any particular case mentioned in the Holy Quran.

Let us now apply these principles to the miracles of Jesus. According to the Holy Quran " the Christ, son of Mary, is nothing more than a messenger " (v : 76), and, therefore, if he is stated to have raised the dead, the statement must be taken in the same sense in

which other messengers of God, and most of all the Holy Prophet Muhammad, raised the dead, that is to say, by breathing spiritual life into those who were devoid of faith and spiritual life. In no other sense could he raise the dead according to the Holy Quran. *xx*

We may now deal with the other miracle of Jesus which, according to Dr. Chattopadhyaya, shows that he had the power of creating. This miracle is related in the following verses which I take as translated by Dr. Chattopadhyaya: "And He (God) will instruct him (Jesus) in the Book, and the Wisdom and the Law and the Evangel; and he shall be an apostle to the children of Israel. 'Now have I come,' he will say, 'to you with a sign from your Lord: out of clay will I make for you, as it were, the figure of a bird, and I will breathe into it and it shall become by God's permission a bird; and I will heal the blind and the leper; and by God's leave will I quicken the dead'" (iii: 43). "And when I taught thee the Scripture and Wisdom, and the Law and the Evangel; and when thou didst fashion of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird by My permission, and didst breathe into it, and by My permission it became a bird; and thou didst heal the blind and the leper by My permission, and when by permission thou didst bring forth the dead" (v: 110).

Now the alleged miracles of Jesus are not spoken of alone but on both occasions where they are mentioned as blessings of God upon Jesus, other Divine blessings upon him are also mentioned and these consist in his being taught the Book and Wisdom and the Law and Evangel. In this there lies a clear indication as to the nature of the three miracles, *viz.*, the breathing into forms of clay, the healing of the sick and the giving of life to the dead. Evidently, and also as alleged in these verses, the mission of Jesus was that of a messenger of God, that is to say, to purify his people of the spiritual and moral evils that prevailed among them and to breathe spiritual life into those who were spiritually dead. The Holy Quran first tells us that Almighty God taught to Jesus the Book and Wisdom and thus endowed him with the power to effect spiritual cures and breathe spiritual life into those who were devoid of it, and then adds that he healed the sick and gave life to the dead thus clearly indicating that it was to the spiritually sick and dead that it was referring. In fact,

the healing of the sick was such a common practice at the time of Jesus that no sensible person could suppose the physical healing of a few sick persons to be a great work or miracle of a prophet of God. Jesus could not be supposed to be endeavouring to convince his opponents of his Divine mission by saying that he could heal the sick when according to the Gospels similar miracles were wrought by the disciples of the pharisees (Matt. 12: 27; Luke 11: 19); by a man who followed not with the disciples of Jesus (Matt. 9: 38-40; Lk. 9: 49); and by others whom according to Matt. 7: 22 Jesus rejects in his final judgment as not being true believers in him; and while the Gospels abound with testimony showing that where there was unbelief there the alleged miracles of healing could not be wrought even by Jesus.

The joint testimony of the Gospels and the Holy Quran, therefore, shows that the great miracle of Jesus was not the healing of a few physical ailments, but the breathing of a new life into his followers and uprooting the spiritual diseases that had brought about the degeneration of the Jews who still followed the word of the law but were utter strangers to its spirit. And whatever dubiety there may hang about the Gospel narratives of the miracles of Jesus as to their true nature, the Holy Quran has, by repeatedly stating that the great work of the prophets of God is to give life to the spiritually dead, sight to the spiritually blind, hearing to the spiritually deaf and speech to the spiritually dumb, placed it beyond all doubt that when it speaks of Jesus' giving life to the dead and sight to the blind or his healing leprosy and breathing life into forms of clay, it does not speak of a thaumaturgist or a legerdemainist but of a "Messenger of God" whom God Himself had taught the "Book and Wisdom and the Law and Evangel." In fact, so often does the Holy Quran speak of the unbelievers as dead, deaf, dumb and blind that it is absolutely unreasonable to think of physical ailments and physical disabilities when these or similar words are used in connection with the messengers of God.

It remains to be seen now what is the meaning intended to be conveyed by the statement that Jesus made forms of clay as if they were birds and then he breathed into them and they became flying things. We have already shown that the power of creating things

belongs, according to the Holy Quran, to God and God alone, and, therefore, whatever meaning may be attached to the words, they do not and cannot convey the significance that Jesus created birds. Following the principle indicated above, *viz.*, that the Holy Quran was making out a case for Jesus as a prophet of God, as a breather of spiritual life into mere forms of clay, and not as a legerdemainist, we come to the conclusion that the words signify nothing more than this that Jesus breathed spiritual life into men who were so utterly devoid of spirituality that they were mere forms of clay who could not rise above the earth. They are likened to birds after Jesus breathed into them because they could soar into the higher regions of spirituality as a bird soars in the high aerial regions.

This, we think, is the true interpretation of the verses. For the sake of those who would insist upon a too literal significance of the words we would add another interpretation. But it must be borne in mind that we must always adopt such an interpretation of the words of the Quran as is in consistence with the spirit of the Book and is not calculated to contradict the other parts. Now take the question of raising the dead. If a man has actually died, God Himself would not send him back to this life, much less could the performance of such a miracle be expected at the hand of a prophet. But as we have seen, the Holy Quran speaks of the soul of a man being taken even in his sleep though it is sent back, while it adds on the same occasion that if the decree of death has actually been passed, on no account is the soul sent back then. Thus there is a distinction between apparent death and actual death. In the former case the soul is sent back, ordinarily as in the case of a sleeping man, and extraordinarily as in the case of a person who may be dead to all appearance but in whose case death may not have actually taken place nor decomposition of the body begun; but in the latter case, *viz.*, when death has actually taken place and the decomposition of the body has begun, there is a strict Divine prohibition against the soul being sent back to this world. Jesus himself seems to have had this distinction in mind. The only miracle of raising a dead person that is related by the Synoptic Gospels is that relating to the ruler's daughter, who was mistaken to be dead by her relatives, but of whom Jesus emphatically said, "the maid is not dead but sleepeth."

(Matt. 9: 24). Her soul was sent back because she was not actually dead. The principle laid down in the Holy Quran was, therefore, also borne in mind by Jesus, and though he is considered in this case to have raised a dead person, yet it was a case in which death had not actually overtaken that person. In this sense the dead can no doubt be raised and there may have been other cases besides that of the maid referred to above similar to it in which impending death may have been delayed by the prayers of Jesus. There is no harm in such cases being spoken of as equivalent to the raising of the dead, for apparently though not actually there is a case of death. It must, however, be borne in mind that Jesus has by no means any distinction above the other prophets of God in this respect, and the raising of the dead in this sense is not a peculiarity of his.

The miracles of healing mentioned in the Holy Quran, if taken literally, afford no difficulty as has already been shown, though they present to us Jesus not as a prophet but as a thaumaturgist. The same is the case with the making of the birds of clay and of temporarily making them fly, which if not legerdemain is nothing more than mesmerism. It is certain that the birds so made by Jesus did not live and the commentators have stated that they fell after the first flight. In no case did their making amount to the creation of birds. The words of the Quran are that Jesus fashioned out, not actually but as it were, the figure of a bird. It is not even said that he breathed a soul into these forms, but that he breathed into them and they became flying things. Having followed the profession of a carpenter in early life it may not have even needed miraculous power on his part to be able to effect such a result. But taking it in the literal sense of the words to be a miracle, it did not amount to creation of birds and the flight did not show that life was actually breathed into them. The staff of Moses turned a serpent according to the Holy Quran but this did not mean that Moses had the power of creating serpents. Similar is the case with Jesus' birds even if the words are taken in a too literal sense. The supposed miracles of creating and quickening the dead thus dwindle into insignificance before the mighty powers and attributes of God, and to think that a case for the Divinity of Jesus can be made up on this ground is absurd.

10 & 11 Saviour and Final Judge of Mankind.

These two conclusions are drawn from one and the same verse and accordingly they are here dealt with together. The following is the verse from which these conclusions are drawn: *و ان من اهل الكتاب الا ليو منن به قبل موته و يوم القيا مة يكون عليهم شهيد ا* (لنساء) Dr. Chattopadhyaya's translation of the verse runs thus: "And there shall not be one of the people of the Book but shall believe in him (Jesus) before his death; and in the Day of Resurrection he (Jesus) will be a witness against them." The reader would not find anything in the words to support the strange conclusions stated above but the learned doctor's imagination supplies the whole material. By the people of the Book are meant, according to his interpretation, not the Jews and the Christians alone, but the Jews, the Christians and the Muhammadans. Believing in Jesus does not carry the same significance as believing in the other prophets of God and in the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, but it means, according to Dr. Chattopadhyaya, acknowledging Jesus to be the "Lord and Saviour" of the world. And lastly being a witness against the *Ahl-i-Kitab* when handled by the learned interpreter loses its own meaning and comes to signify, being "the final Judge of all mankind." These interpretations are so absurd and fanciful on their very face that they hardly need a refutation, but to make the meaning of the verse plain we shall discuss them at some length.

Take the phrase the *Ahl-i-Kitab* or "the people of the Book" first. It means the people to whom a book was revealed before the Muhammadans but in the terminology of the Holy Quran it does not signify the Muhammadans. As the Jews and the Christians were the two most important people who being followers of revealed books ostensibly had to be addressed by the Holy Quran directly, the word *Ahl-i-Kitab* or people of the Book came to signify the Jews and the Christians (see the explanation of *اهل الكتاب* under the word *اهل* in Lane's Lexicon which says that the *Ahl-i-Kitab* are the people of the scriptures or Bible: and the readers, or reciters, of the Mosaic Law, and of the Gospel.") But throughout the Holy Quran and the Muslim theological literature, the Muhammadans are not included among the *Ahl-i-Kitab*. Let us now take the particular occasion where this word is used

The mention of the *Ahl-i-Kitab* begins with the 152nd verse of the chapter which is the first verse of a new *ruku* or section and reads thus: "The people of the Book will ask of thee to cause a book to come down unto them out of heaven. But a greater thing than this did they ask of Moses, for they said, 'show us God plainly'." It is clear that by the *Ahl-i-Kitab* are meant here only the Jews and even the Christians are not included. The section which opens thus goes on to describe the wickedness of the Jews until it comes to their rejection and persecution of Jesus, and gives as one of the reasons of their being cursed by God: "And for their unbelief,—and for their having spoken against Mary a grievous calumny, and for their saying, 'verily we have slain the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, an Apostle of God. Yet they did not put an end to his life by murder or by crucifixion but they were only thrown into confusion concerning him. And verily they who differed about him were in doubt concerning him; no sure knowledge had they about him, but followed only conjectures, and they did not actually kill him but God took him up to Himself And God is Mighty, Wise!" Here follows the verse under discussion: "And there is not one of the people of the Book but believes in this before his death! and in the day of Resurrection he will be a witness against them." And then the holy Book continues still speaking of the Jews "And because of the wrong done by those who were Jews. . . ." (iv: 155-8.)

This long quotation from the Holy Quran does not only explain the meaning of the *Ahl i-Kitab*, by which the Jews and the Christians are clearly meant in the verse under discussion, the Muhammadans at any rate not being included in the description, but it really solves the whole question about the meaning of the verse which Dr. Chattopadhyaya twists into a testimony of the Divinity of Jesus. The Jews are here declared to be guilty for uttering certain falsehoods against Jesus of which two are particularly mentioned, *viz.*, a grievous calumny against Mary (because the Jews said that Jesus was of illegitimate birth) and their saying that they had caused the death of Jesus on the cross (because such a death according to the Old Testament made a person undergo the curse of God and this was inconsistent with Jesus' claim to prophethood.) Both allegations of the Jews are here condemned as being false. As regards the former of these allegations the Holy Quran calls it a grievous calumny, and

as regards the latter it says that though the Jews asserted that they put Jesus to death by crucifixion, the fact was that they themselves had no sure knowledge about what happened to Jesus because they were thrown into a confusion. The truth of this remark is made abundantly clear by the circumstances attending Jesus' crucifixion. Though he was nailed to the cross, yet he was taken down in less than three hours, a duration quite insufficient to bring about death by the method of the protracted tortures of the cross. Then his legs were not broken. His enemies were thrown into a confusion on account of the darkness which prevailed at the time, and he was given in the charge of a wealthy disciple. Many other circumstances combined with these to save his life, and this is what is meant by the Quran when it says that the Jews did not succeed in causing his death by crucifixion but that they were thrown into confusion.

Then follows a statement about "those who differed about him." Evidently in the terminology of the Quran the differers about Jesus are the Jews and the Christians. The former denounced him as an impostor and the latter bowed down before him as their God, but as to his end both parties "were in doubt concerning him." "No sure knowledge had they about him but followed only conjectures," the one fact certain being that "the Jews did not actually slay him" or bring about his death upon the cross. The Jews thought that they had brought about his death upon the cross and that thus it was proved that he was cursed by God and from this they concluded that he could not be a messenger of God; the Christians shared in the same doubts but they thought that though Jesus was subjected to curse by suffering death on the cross, he had borne this curse for their sake. Both of these were simply conjectures, the fact according to the Holy Quran being that Jesus did not die upon the cross and his soul was not, therefore, subjected to curse, but it was taken up to God, like the souls of all righteous servants of God, when he died a natural death.

It is while mentioning these circumstances and pointing out the errors of both the Jews and the Christians that the Holy Quran adds as if in wonder that the beliefs of a people should be founded on such doubtful occurrences: "and there is not one of the people of the Book but believes in this before his death!"

Notwithstanding that the circumstances attending Jesus' crucifixion were so obscure, it is to be wondered that both parties of the people of the Book that differ about Jesus base their beliefs on these doubtful circumstances of which they have "no sure knowledge." What error could be greater than basing one's beliefs on circumstances which might or might not be true and about the truth of which there lurk doubts in the minds of even these people. It is a fact that neither the Jews nor the Christians can claim to possess positive and conclusive evidence of the death of Jesus upon the cross, the Jews cannot do it because they never made themselves certain that the death of Jesus had occurred and knowing that it could not occur within the short duration of less than three hours by a method of torture which extended sometimes to two or three days, they did not make themselves sure of it by resorting to *crurifragium*, a common practice following crucifixion to ensure the death of the culprit, which was resorted to at the very time in the case of the thieves crucified along with Jesus; and the Christians cannot claim it because the stories of the life of Jesus which they accept as revealed books show clearly that Jesus was found living after the event of the crucifixion with the same physical body which was nailed to the cross as the fresh wounds and subjection to hunger and thirst showed. Notwithstanding that both parties severally admit these circumstances which at least made the probability of Jesus' life far greater than his death, both people believe it as an article of their faith that Jesus died upon the cross, and every Jew or Christian must express his belief in this article before he dies. This is the reason that the Holy Quran after negating Jesus' death on the cross and stating that even the Jews and the Christians have no sure knowledge of his death by crucifixion and that they entertain doubts as to this, adds that notwithstanding these doubts there is not a Jew or a Christian but must express a belief in this. The Jew expresses such belief because he thinks that an expectation of the true Messiah in accordance with his religious beliefs involves a denunciation of the false claimants to Messiahship and it is in this list that he includes Jesus thinking that his death on the cross is a proof positive of his being an impostor. And the Christian must express a belief in Jesus' death on the cross because this is the foundation upon

which according to the Christian religion the whole theory of salvation rests.

The meaning of the verse is now clear, but it admits of another significance also. It may mean that immediately before death every Jew or Christian sees his error in the false belief entertained by him about Jesus and then believes in him as he ought to believe. Jesus according to the Holy Quran was a messenger of God like numerous other messengers that were from time to time raised among the Israelites and other people, but the Jews and the Christians instead of believing in him as such went to two extremes. The Jews denounced him as an impostor and the Christians took him for their God. But every Jew or Christian, according to this verse, must admit at the moment of his death that Jesus was a messenger of God because the errors of his own false belief would then become manifest to him.

The conclusion which Dr. Chattopadhyaya draws from the words of the verse under discussion is the most extravagant conclusion that can be drawn. According to him, believing in a messenger of God means admitting him to be "Lord and Saviour." If this were true, every prophet of God would be Lord and Saviour because the people are required to believe in him. The Muhammadans are required to believe in all the prophets of God who passed before the Holy Prophet, Muhammad, and according to the learned writer in the *Hindustan Review* this must mean that they should admit hundreds of thousands of the prophets to be the Lords and Saviours of the world. The error is so manifest that I need not detain the reader any more to expose it.

The second conclusion which Dr. Chattopadhyaya draws from the verse is that "Jesus will be the final judge of all mankind at the day of Resurrection." This conclusion is based on the words "and in the day of Resurrection he will be a witness against them." In the first place, the personal pronoun "them" stands for the "people of the Book" spoken of in the verse under discussion and the preceding verses, that is to say, the Jews and the Christians and not "the whole world." Secondly being a witness against a people is not equivalent to being their judge. The witness and the judge are essentially two different persons, and it is strange to find a man

of the vast learning of Dr. Chattopadhyaya confusing the one with the other. What is meant is that Jesus will be a witness against the Jews and the Christians on the day of judgment, against the former for their rejection and persecution of him, and against the latter for their taking him for God, a doctrine which he never taught them. Similar expressions are used of the other prophets of God and even of the believers in the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Read for instance ii: 137 which says: "Thus have We made you an intermediate people that you may be witnesses against the whole of mankind, and that the Apostle (Muhammad) may be a witness in regard to you;" and iv: 45 which says: "How shall it be then with the deniers of prophets when we bring up against them witnesses from all people and when We bring thee up as a witness against them."

12. Death and Rafa' of Jesus.

Dr. Chattopadhyaya contends that in the earlier chapters of the Holy Quran it is admitted that Jesus really died on the cross and was then directly taken up into the bosom of God, but that it is denied in the later chapters. In support of this contention he quotes the following verses of the Holy Quran: "And the peace of God was on me the day I was born, and will be the day I shall die and the day I shall be raised to life" (xix: 34); "Remember when God said 'O Jesus! verily I will cause thee to die and will take thee up to Myself, and clear thee from (the blames of) those who deny thee, and I will place those who follow thee above those who deny thee till the day of Resurrection" (iii: 48;) and iv: 156 which he thinks as contradicting the conclusions of these two verses and which runs thus "And (God has cursed the Jews) for their saying, 'verily we have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, an Apostle of God.' Yet they slew him not and they crucified him not." Dr. Chattopadhyaya thus comments on these two verses:

"How to reconcile or account for the evident contradiction contained in the Koranic verses referred to above? Muhammadan commentators have, no doubt, tried their level best to explain away the above passages in a different sense, and thus harmonise their

meaning with each other, but to me the real sense of the verses quoted from the surah iii as well as from the surah xix is so clear, that I cannot withhold the conviction, that in the earlier part of his career when these two surahs were revealed, Muhammad really believed in the death and Resurrection of Christ, but that later on at Medina where the surah iv, just quoted above, had undoubtedly had its origin, he changed his opinion on the subject probably under the influence of new information derived from the schismatic sect of the Basilidians who, it is well-known, held similar views."

We know of course that conviction comes rather too easily to Dr. Chattopadhyaya and we need not therefore feel surprised at his conviction under the circumstances narrated by him in the above paragraph. But as a fact we are bound to question the accuracy of his historical knowledge. His conviction is based upon the argument that the third chapter of the Holy Quran, entitled the *Al-i-Imrân*, was revealed at an early date an argument which shows that the learned contributor of the *Hindustan Review* has not even passed the stage of tyrocity in his knowledge of the history of Islam. The third chapter of the Quran was revealed at Medina and it even contains controversies with the Christians. Muir says: "The births of John and of Jesus are once again related, as well as the birth of the Virgin Mary, in a passage (Sura iii) delivered at Medina only a few years before the death of Mohamet, on the occasion of an embassy from the Christian tribe of Najran."

The question at issue, however, is, is there really a contradiction between the statements made earlier and those made later by the Holy Quran? Referring to the verses as quoted above, the reader would see that iii: 48 and xix: 34 do not contain the remotest hint to Jesus' death on the cross; nay, as I will just now show, they contain hints of a denial of his death by crucifixion, while iv: 156 contains a plain denial of his death on the cross. To think that there is any contradiction between the two statements is the work of a frenzied brain. Again in chapter v which in an arrangement according to the order of the revelation of the various chapters is placed at the end, Jesus is made to say: "I spoke not to them aught but that which Thou didst bid me—'worship God, my Lord and your Lord'; and I was their witness while I stayed among them; but since

death is too plain to be mistaken by any sensible person. There is no contradiction anywhere, but from the first to the last it keeps up the same position. It does not deny his death; nay, it asserts in plain words that Jesus died. But not a single word of it can be said to hint at his death on the cross, for this it denies in equally plain words. Therefore what it says is this that Jesus did die but that he did not die on the cross. In other words he died a natural death. This simple and plain assertion Dr. Chattopadhyaya distorts into allegations which considered in the light of the words of the Quran are the most wild that could be made by any man with a head upon his shoulders.

As regards Jesus' being "directly taken up into the bosom of God," it is a distortion of the meaning of *rafa'* which we have already explained under the eighth heading. There we quoted other examples of the use of the word from the Holy Quran. In the traditions of the Holy Prophet this word is also largely used. A man's *rafa'* means the rising up of his soul to God after death, and in iii: 48, the Holy Quran shows by the arrangement it has adopted—"O Jesus! I will cause thee to die and will raise thee up to Myself—that the *rafa'* of Jesus took place after his death and that, therefore, it was a *rafa'* of the same nature as the *rafa'* of all the righteous servants of God. Speaking of the unrighteous, the Holy Quran says on one occasion لا تفتح لهم ابواب السموات "The doors of heaven are not opened for them" (vii: 38), indicating that in their case *rafa'* or the rising up of the soul to heaven does not take place. Again on another occasion, addressing His righteous servants Almighty God says: "O thou soul that art at rest! return to thy Lord, He pleased with thee and thou pleased with Him" (lxxxix: 28).

We have now dealt with all the allegations on whose basis Dr. Chattopadhyaya made up a case of Divinity for Jesus Christ. We have shown that none of the descriptions of Jesus in the Holy Quran amounts to a description of the Divine Being. On the other hand, we find that not a single attribute of God is applied to Jesus Christ. Dr. Chattopadhyaya has himself been unable to point out any such attribute. That is not all. Jesus is repeatedly described in the Holy Quran as a human being and as an apostle like other apostles. After speaking of Jesus and exhorting the Christians

to take God for their only Lord, the Holy Quran adds: "It beseebeth not a man, that God should give him the Scriptures and the Wisdom and Prophethood, and that then he should say to men, 'Become worshippers of me besides God'" (iii: 73). That Jesus Christ is the man meant here is explained even by Rodwell in a footnote to his translation of the verse where he says: "Muhammad insinuates that the claim to be equal with God could never have been made by Jesus himself, but by his followers, in ignorance of the Scriptures and of his true nature." The word used for Jesus in this verse is *bas̄har* which means a human being and hence according to the Quran Jesus is nothing more than a human being. Again in v: 99 we read: *ما المسيح ابن مريم الا رسول قد خلت من قبله الرسل* "The Messiah, Son of Mary, is nothing but an apostle; apostles (like him) have passed before him; and his mother was a righteous woman: they both ate food." Here it is plainly denied that Jesus had any characteristic which distinguished him from the other apostles of God, and it is added that so far from being Divine both he and his mother were human beings who like other mortals ate food. Rodwell adds a foot-note here too, saying that it is meant that Jesus and his mother "were human beings, and subject to the usual wants and disabilities of ordinary persons."

I have not laid any stress on the Holy Quran's denunciation of the doctrines of the sonship of Christ and Trinity as this point is admitted by Dr. Chattopadhyaya. He, however, makes one mistake which I must point out. He says that whenever the Quran speaks of the doctrine of sonship it uses the expression *walad* or *walada*, and that this word as meaning "son," or "gave birth to a son" is used only in a corporeal sense. From this he draws the conclusion that the Holy Prophet misunderstood the doctrine of sonship as held by the Christians as he took it to be in a corporeal sense. But it is a mistake. The Quran uses both the words *walad* and *ibn*, the latter word being that which is used by the Christians themselves. The Quran uses the word *ibn* for Jesus in ix: 30 which says: *وقالت النصارى المسيح ابن الله* "And the Christians say that the Messiah is *ibnnullah* (the son of God)." The Quran condemns the doctrine of the sonship of Jesus because the

Christians consider Jesus to be the son of God in a sense different from that in which the phrase is used in the Old Testament. If Jesus is the son of God in the same sense in which Israel, for instance, was the son of God, the Muhammadans have no objection to the use of the phrase, but when the Christians distort that sense and say that being the son he must be of the same essence as God Himself then the doctrine of sonship becomes the most detestable blasphemy and hence it is that the Quran condemns it. We would deal with this subject more fully on some other occasion.

Dr. Chattopadhyaya hints in his paper that the Holy Prophet was at first well-disposed to the peculiar Christian doctrines and borrowed a good deal from them; but that afterwards when he made up his mind to found a *national* religion, he deprecated the Christian doctrines. He applies this rule to the mention of Jesus' death in the Holy Quran and not to that other most important Christian doctrine, *viz.*, the sonship of Jesus, though he must be aware that the doctrines of atonement and sonship are so closely related to each other in the Christian religion that the one could not be held if the other was denied. Now the doctrine of the sonship of Jesus is condemned in the strongest words in early Meccan *suras*. See *xix: 36, 91-94*. This doctrine is described to be the most blasphemous doctrine in the earliest notices of Jesus in the Holy Quran. It is called a "monstrous" doctrine, at which "the heavens might be rent and the earth cleave asunder and the mountains fall down in fragments." As regards the notices of Jesus' death, we have shown above that in the earlier as well as in the later chapters the Holy Quran affirms the death of Jesus but it nowhere affirms his death on the cross, neither in the chapters revealed at Mecca nor in those revealed at Medina.

Jesus, therefore, according to the Holy Quran is neither God, nor son of God, nor the possessor of any attribute of the Divine Being but only a prophet like the prophets that passed away before him and essentially a human being and nothing more than that. We think that the above discussion would suffice to remove the misconceptions raised by Dr. Chattopadhyaya's article. If necessary, we would revert to the subject again in a later issue.

A Religious Conference at Lahore

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On the 2nd, 3rd and 4th of December a religious conference was held at Lahore in connection with the anniversary of the Gurukul section of the Lahore Arya Samaj at which representatives of Islam, Christianity, Brahmo Samaj and Sanatan Dharm besides the Arya Samaj read papers on the question: "Can any book be said to have been revealed by God, if so, which"? The one remarkable feature of the Conference was the broad spirit in which the different religions viewed each other, though the Arya Samaj itself, notwithstanding that it organised the meeting, showed an utter lack of this humanitarian and tolerant spirit. The Arya Samaj reserved the last day for its own paper, and caused a keen disappointment to the followers of other faiths by giving vent to bitter invectives against their sacred leaders and books.

On behalf of Islam the paper on the proposed question was written by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, and we hope to be able to place it before our readers in the next issue. The following brief extract from it will, however, enable the reader to see the broad spirit in which Islam looks at other religions:

"The principle on which Almighty God has established us and which He has revealed to us through His Holy Book is that as surely as there is a God, He reveals His will to mankind, and as He is the God of the whole world and not of any one sect or one tribe, He has also blessed all parts of the world and all tribes of the human race with the greatest of His gifts *i.e.*, Divine revelation which is the fountain-head of true guidance, and He has not been sparing in granting this gift to any people This principle has been taught to us by the Holy Book which is called the Quran in which it is said; 'And there is no people among whom a warner has not passed.'

"That noble Prophet has taught us that the messengers and prophets whom different people in the world have taken as such, and whose greatness is acknowledged by any people, were really the messengers and prophets of God, and their books were Divine

revelations granted to them, though afterwards they may have been corrupted or altered or their true meaning may have been obscured, and, therefore, these books also ought to be respected.

"Once our Holy Prophet, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, was asked if prophets had been raised among other people, and he replied that prophets had been raised in all countries. He also said that in India there was a prophet of a dark colour who was called Káhin', that is to say, Krishna. When asked whether the word of God had ever been revealed in the Persian language, he replied in the affirmative."

This principle contains, we think, the best and soundest basis for a mutual understanding between the various religions, but it is a pity that the Arya Samaj rejects all books for one which it does not understand, and which has never been known to people living outside India.