

possibly understand the reality of prophethood since they were completely unacquainted with this phenomenon. They could say that they were totally unaware of the essence of prophethood and their nature was not given any example to understand it; therefore, how could they possibly comprehend this concealed truth? Thus has it been the way of God from antiquity and ever since the foundation was laid for the creation of this world that ordinary people—irrespective of being good or bad, being righteous or disobedient, being the follower of a true faith or a false one—are also shown some true dreams or vouchsafed true revelations so that their concept and conjecture, which derives from hearsay and imitation of others, may reach the level of *‘ilmul-yaqīn* [knowledge by inference]<sup>1</sup>☆ and they may have personal experience which should help spiritual progress. To this end, the Omniscient One has fashioned the human brain in such a way, and endowed it with such spiritual faculties, that it can experience some true dreams and can receive some true revelations. However, those true dreams and true revelations are not an indication of any greatness or esteemed status, but are only pathways to progress acting merely as samples. If such dreams and revelations signify anything, it is only that such a person has the right nature, unless he is ruined by carnal passions. It is implied by such a nature that the person can advance [spiritually] if no barriers and screens are encountered. To illustrate, there may be a tract of land which shows signs of having underground water, but the water lies buried beneath several layers of earth and is admixed with many forms of sludge; and the water that is pure, pleasant, and usable cannot be reached without a great deal of labour and many days of digging the earth. Therefore, it is the height of insolence, absurdity, and misfortune

- 
1. ☆ Knowledge is of three kinds: (1) First: *‘ilmul-yaqīn*, [knowledge by inference] which is akin to seeing smoke rise from a distance and deducing that there must be a fire at that spot; (2) Second: *‘ainul-yaqīn* [certainty by sight], which is akin to seeing that fire with one’s own eyes; and (3) Third: *ḥaqul-yaqīn*, [true certainty] which is akin to feeling its heat by putting one’s hand in that fire. (Author)

to imagine that the pinnacle of human excellence lies in experiencing some true dream or true revelation. Rather, there are many other requisites and conditions for human excellence and, unless they are all fulfilled, such dreams and revelations are a part of the realm of trials in accordance with the plan of God. May God safeguard every seeker from their ill consequences.

At this point it should be borne in mind by one who is enamoured by revelation, that *wahī* [revelation] is of two kinds: *wahyul-ibtilā'* [the revelation of trial] and *wahyul-istifā'* [the revelation of exaltation]. The revelation of trial sometimes brings about ruination; as, for example, Balaam was ruined for the same reason. But the recipient of the revelation of exaltation is never ruined. Moreover, even the revelation of trial is not experienced by everyone. Just as many people are born physically deaf, dumb, and blind, so do some lack spiritual faculties. Just as a blind person can carry along with the guidance of others, so do these people. But, on account of general testimony, which is tantamount to a matter-of-fact statement, they cannot deny these real occurrences, nor can they allege that all are similarly blind as they are—as is the everyday observation that a blind man cannot argue that those who claim to be able to see are liars, nor can he deny the fact that, except for him, thousands of others have eyes, for he observes that people do use their eyes and can do what the blind cannot. However, if there had come a time when everyone was blind and there was no one who could see, and a controversy emerged as to whether there was a time in the past when only people with sight were born, the blind could have ample reason to deny, debate, and contest. I am inclined to think that the blind would have ended up winning this argument, because anyone who refers only to the past—and cannot show, in any other person of his own era, those human qualities and excellences that he claims to be real, and contends that those powers and qualities are not present anymore but did exist in the past—would lose the argument on critical review. If human beings still possess the abilities—such as the ability to see, hear, smell, touch, remember, think, etc.—which were bestowed