

The Green Announcement

**Ḥaḍrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad
of Qadian^{as}**

The Promised Messiah and Mahdi
Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamā‘at

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Sabz Ishtihār
The Green Announcement

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Introduction

About the Author

Born in 1835 in Qadian (India), Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi^{as}, devoted himself to the study of the Holy Quran and to a life of prayer and devotion. Finding Islam the target of foul attacks from all directions and the fortunes of Muslims at a low ebb, he, as the Imam and the voice articulate of the age, undertook the task of vindicating Islam and presenting its teachings in their pristine purity. In his vast corpus of writings, lectures, discourses, religious debates etc., he argued that Islam was the only living faith, by following which, man could establish contact with his Creator and enter into communion with Him. He announced that God had appointed him the Messiah and Mahdi, according to the prophecies of the Bible, the Holy Quran and Ahadith. In 1889 he began to accept initiation into his Jamā'at, which is now established in over a hundred and eighty countries. He wrote more than eighty books in Urdu, Arabic and Persian.

After his demise in 1908, the Promised Messiah^{as} was succeeded by Khulafā (Successors), who have continued his mission. Ḥaḍrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalīfatul Masīḥ V^{at}, is the present head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamā'at and the fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah^{as}.

About the Book

This booklet is entitled *A Discourse upon the Death of Bashir*, but has become generally known as *The Green Announcement* on the account of the colour of the paper it was first printed on. It was written by the Promised Messiah^{as} to remove the doubts and misgivings that had arisen out of the death of his son Bashir, the First.

This first English translation of *Sabz Ishtihār* has been prepared by Wakālat Taṣnīf, Rabwah.

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Chaudhry Muhammad Ali
Wakīlut Taṣnīf
Teḥrīk Jadīd
Rabwah
3rd May, 2008

Publisher's Note

Please note that words in the text in normal brackets () and in between the long dashes—are the words of the Promised Messiah^{as}. If any explanatory words or phrases are added by the translator for the purpose of clarification, they are put in square brackets [].

The name of Muhammad^{sa}, the Holy Prophet of Islam, has been followed by the symbol ^{sa}, which is an abbreviation for the salutation *Ṣallallāhu 'Alaihi Wasallam* (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). The names of other Prophets and Messengers are followed by the symbol ^{as}, an abbreviation for '*Alaihiṣsalām* (on whom be peace). The actual salutations have not generally been set out in full, but they should nevertheless, be understood as being repeated in full in each case. The symbol ^{ra} is used with the name of the companions of the Holy Prophet^{sa} and those of the Promised Messiah^{as}, and it stands for *Raḍi Allāhu 'anhu/'anhā/'anhum* (May Allah be pleased with him/with her/with them). Likewise, the symbol th stands for *Raḥimahullāhu Ta'ālā* (may Allah have mercy on him), and ^{at} stands for *Ayyadahullāhu Ta'ālā* (May Allah, the Mighty help him).

In transliterating Arabic words we have followed the following system adopted by the Royal Asiatic Society.

- ا at the beginning of a word, pronounced as *a*, *i*, *u* preceded by a very slight aspiration, like *h* in the English word 'honour'.
ث *th*, pronounced like *th* in the English word 'thing'.
ح *h*, a guttural aspirate, stronger than *h*.
خ *kh*, pronounced like the Scotch *ch* in 'loch'.
ذ *dh*, pronounced like the English *th* in 'that'.
ص *s*, strongly articulated *s*.
ض *d*, similar to the English *th* in 'this'.
ط *t*, strongly articulated palatal *t*.
ظ *z*, strongly articulated *z*.
ع ' , a strong guttural, the pronunciation of which must be learnt by the ear.

غ *gh*, a sound approached very nearly in the r 'grasseye' in French, and in the German r. It requires the muscles of the throat to be in the 'gargling' position whilst pronouncing it.

ق *q*, a deep guttural k sound.

ئ ' , a sort of catch in the voice.

Short vowels are represented by:

a for (like *u* in 'bud');

i for (like *i* in 'bid');

u for (like *oo* in 'wood');

Long vowels by:

ā for or (like *a* in 'father');

ī for or (like *ee* in 'deep');

ū for (like *oo* in 'root');

Other:

ai for (like *i* in 'site');

au for (resembling *ou* in 'sound').

The consonants not included in the above list have the same phonetic value as in the principal languages of Europe.

We have not transliterated Arabic words which have become part of English language, e.g., Islam, Mahdi, Quran, Hijra, Ramadan, Hadith, ulema, umma, sunna, kafir, purdah etc.

For quotes straight commas (straight quotes) are used to differentiate them from the curved commas used in the system of transliteration, ‘ for غ, ’ for ε. Commas as punctuation marks are used according to the normal usage. Similarly for apostrophe normal usage is followed.

THE PUBLISHERS

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
نَحْمَدُهُ وَنُصَلِّي عَلَى رَسُولِهِ الْكَرِيمِ
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى عِبَادِهِ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَى¹

A Discourse upon the Demise of Bashir

Let it be known that the demise of my son Bashir Ahmad, who was born on Monday, 7th August 1887, and called back by his Creator, aged sixteen months, on Monday, 4th November 1888, at the time of the morning prayer, has raised a great outcry amongst foolish and ignorant people. Many, including my own relations, have expressed opinions based on malice and ignorance, and the enemies of religion, who are given to dishonesty and slander, have started fabricating stories in connection with the demise of this child. I never intended to issue any announcement or statement about the passing away of this innocent boy, nor was such a course of action required, for there was nothing about his death that could have misled any reasonable person, but when the commotion reached its peak and begun adversely affecting simple-minded and gullible Muslims, then, solely for the sake of Allah, I decided to publish this announcement.

¹ In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.

We praise Allah and invoke His blessings upon His noble Prophet^{sa}. All praise belongs to Allah, and peace be upon His chosen servants.

[Publishers]

The reader should remember that some of my opponents have written disparaging articles about the demise of my son in their newspapers and other publications. They say that he was the same child about whom I had claimed, in my announcements of 20th February 1886, 8th April 1886, and 7th August 1887, that he would become a man of glory and greatness and wealth, and nations would be blessed through him, and some of them even concocted a revelation² to the effect that the boy would marry the daughters of kings. The reader should understand that those who have raised these objections have either been

² The slanderer referred to here is none other than Lekh Rām of Peshāwar, who has referenced all the three above-mentioned announcements in an announcement of his own in order to further his claim, and has acted dishonestly throughout. For instance, in quoting the announcement of 8th April 1886, he only alludes to the passage in which I said that a boy would be born soon within the nine-month period of a pregnancy, but he fails to mention the next sentence in which I said that hitherto it was not clear whether this was the [promised] boy or whether he would be born at a later date within the stipulated nine-year period. He omitted this part intentionally, for it contradicted his assertion and falsified the basis of his false surmise. His other injustice is that, in his announcement, he fails to acknowledge the announcement previously issued by the Āryas and printed at Chashma Nūr Press in Amritsar, in which they acknowledged that it was not clear from any of my three announcements whether the deceased boy was the Promised Reformer or whether he was to come afterwards. This announcement was in itself enough to falsify Lekh Rām's contention, and I invite the reader to once again read this announcement which, for all practical purposes, had better been entitled, '*God loves not the deceivers.*' [Author]

misled or they wish to mislead others. The fact is that no one can cite a single word from any of my announcements published before the child's birth in August 1887, and which have been cited by Lekh Rām of Peshāwar in support of his own assertion, in which I claimed that this particular boy, who is now deceased, would be the Promised Reformer and blessed with a long life. On the other hand, I clearly stated in my announcements of 8th April 1886, and in that of 7th August 1887—which was issued on the day of Bashir's birth with reference to the former announcement—that Divine revelation had not yet disclosed to me whether this particular boy was the Promised Reformer who was to be blessed with a long life, or whether he would be born afterwards. I am amazed that though Lekh Rām was driven by his prejudice to raise objections on the basis of these announcements, and made characteristic use of foul and abusive language in doing so, he did not bother even to read the announcements carefully, which would have saved him the embarrassment of this hasty action. It is unfortunate that the pundits who sermonize in bazaars and preach that shunning falsehood and adopting the truth are the principles of the Ārya faith, do nothing to stop these habitual liars from uttering such falsehood. It is indeed unfortunate that these principles are always preached but never practised.

The long and short of it is that the above mentioned statements of 8th April 1886 and 7th August 1887 are completely silent on what qualities the child would possess. They both testify that the matter was still unclear in the

light of Divine revelation.³ It is true that in my announcement of 20th February 1886 the above mentioned qualities were attributed to a future child, in general terms and without being very specific, but nowhere did I write that these qualities applied to the particular boy who would be born on 7th August 1887. In fact, the announcement does not even specify the time or date of the child's birth. It is, therefore, the height of obstinacy and dishonesty to say that the announcements specified the deceased child as the bearer of these qualities. I have all those announcements in my possession, and I believe most of my readers have them also; if they can read them again they will be able to better judge for themselves.

Upon the birth of the boy who is now deceased, I received

³ The announcement of 8th April 1886, was as follows; "A boy will be born very soon, within the nine-month period of a pregnancy and no longer than that. It has, however, not been made clear to me whether this is the [promised] boy or whether he will be born later within the stipulated nine-year period." See the announcement of 8th April 1886, printed at Chashma-e-Faiḍ Qādrī Press, Batāla.

The text of the announcement of 7th August 1887, is as follows: "Readers! I give you the good news that the boy whose birth I had prophesized in the announcement of 8th April 1886 came into this world on 16th Zil-Qa'ad, or 7th August." See the announcement of 7th August 1887, printed at Victoria Press, Lahore.

Now, is there even a hint in any of the three announcements—which Lekh Rām of Peshāwar has so eagerly quoted—that the deceased boy would be the Promised Reformer and blessed with a long life? Think and reflect! [Author]

hundreds of letters from far and near inquiring whether he was indeed the Promised Reformer who was to be the guide for the people. I told them that until then I had not received any clear revelation pertaining to this matter. It was, nevertheless, conjectured that he might be the Promised Reformer, and for good reason, because many of his personal qualities had been mentioned in various Divine revelations, and they spoke of the purity of his soul, the excellence of his nature, the greatness of his ability, and the enlightenment and inherent goodness of his soul, and they all bespoke his perfect potential. But in view of the fact that all these were inherent qualities, which did not require that the child should attain maturity, I did not make any categorical statement on the basis of Divine revelation that this was the [promised] boy who would grow to maturity. I also delayed the publication of *Sirāj-e-Munīr* in expectation of some Divine revelation that would reveal the truth about this boy, for only then could I write about it confidently and comprehensively. Since I never expressed any definite opinion about the deceased boy on the basis of revelation, and never published a single revelation in this connection, I am only left to wonder who whispered all these things into the ears of my opponents?

Nonetheless, even if I had issued a clear and categorical announcement stating that this child could well be the Promised Reformer and blessed with a long life—basing this view on the fact that Divine revelation had revealed the noble qualities of the deceased child and had given him names such as *Mubashar* [the Promised One], *Bashir*

[Bearer of glad-tidings], *Nūrullāh* [Light of Allah] *Şayyeb* [Heavenly Rain], *Charāgh Dīn* [Light of Faith], etc., which reveal his perfect potential and inherent light—such an interpretive statement would not have been objectionable in the eyes of fair-minded people. On account of their just and perceptive minds, they would have understood that I had reached this conclusion on the basis of a few titles which were not very specific and admitted of more than one meaning and interpretation. And even if they considered this explanation to be an error of judgment, they would have deemed it as unimportant and inconsequential. The ancient Divine law relating to revelations, dreams and visions that are not very specific may not be understood by those who are slow of understanding and blind of heart, but people of wisdom and insight readily understand that an error in interpreting a prophecy is nothing objectionable. Many eminent Prophets and Messengers have made errors in interpreting some of their visions and prophecies,⁴ but it did not surprise or alienate

⁴ The Torah clearly shows that Moses^{as} made errors in understanding and communicating some of his prophecies, and the promises of instant victory and freedom that had been made to the Israelites were not fulfilled in exactly the same manner. Therefore, when the Israelites saw things happening contrary to their expectations, they became extremely frustrated and, overcome by their chronic impatience, said, "O Moses and Aaron! Would that God treat you as you have treated us." It would seem that these impatient people had given in to despair because Moses' words had led them to believe that they would soon be free, but this did not happen and some difficulties intervened which they had not been told about in clear terms.

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their clear-minded and enlightened companions who saw that the error lay not in the substance of the revelations or visions but only in their interpretation. It is thus obvious that errors of judgement committed by religious scholars and mystics do not diminish their status, and if we add to

All this happened because Moses^{as} himself had not been given any clear information about the intervening difficulties and the length of their trials, and it was his own inference that the ignoble Pharaoh would soon be defeated through manifest signs. But God, in accordance with His eternal practice towards all His Prophets, and in order to try Moses^{as} in the early stages of his mission, and to fill him with the awe of His *Istighnā*,* kept these intervening difficulties hidden from him. If all the coming trials and afflictions had been revealed to him beforehand, he would have been reassured and his resolve would have been strengthened. But in that case he would not have been overawed by the ordeals by means of which God had intended to raise his and his followers' spiritual status and make them recipients of Divine reward in the hereafter.

In the same way, Jesus' disciples had believed that the promises of worldly success and prosperity that the Messiah^{as} had made to them would be fulfilled very easily and in a short time. Some of the glad-tidings the Messiah^{as} gave them even seemed to imply that he would soon establish a great kingdom, and some of his disciples even began collecting weapons in anticipation. The Messiah^{as} also spoke of his second coming in a manner which suggested that the disciples and their contemporaries would still be alive when he returned to the world in glory, and it seems that Jesus^{as} was himself inclined towards this view which he impressed upon his disciples, but, as it turned out, his interpretation was wrong and he had made an error of judgement.

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* Being Independent and Besought of all. [Publishers]

this the fact that I never made any categorical announcement that turned out to be wrong, one can only wonder why my narrow-minded opponents heaped such venom on me at the demise of Bashir Ahmad? Do they have any evidence to prove that I issued such announcements, or are they merely exposing the baser impulses of their souls for everyone to see? I am truly amazed at the way some naïve Muslims are readily plagued by doubt and suspicion. If they indeed possess an announcement of mine in which I categorically stated, on the authority of Divine revelation, that this particular boy would be the Promised Reformer and blessed with a long life, why do they not produce it? Let me assure them, however, that I never issued such an announcement.

Another amazing thing mentioned in the Bible is that close to four hundred Prophets made a prophecy about the victory of an Israelite King, but it was not fulfilled and the King was met with defeat. See I Kings 22:19.

In my case, however, none of the prophecies that I have made on the basis of revelation have turned out to be wrong. Divine revelation had clearly foretold the birth of two boys, and also that some of my children would die in infancy. See the announcements of 20th February 1886 and 10th July 1888. In accordance with the first prophecy, a child was born and he soon died. The second child, whom the revelation refers to as Bashir the Second, and also as Mahmood, has not been born till today, 1st December 1888. But, in accordance with God's promise, he will most certainly be born within the time stipulated in the prophecy. Heavens and earth may pass, but the word of God can never be averted. Fools laugh at His revelations and ridicule His holy tidings because the end is hidden from their eyes. [Author]

God, however, did inform me through some other revelations that the deceased boy was gifted with excellent personal qualities. He had been cleansed of all worldly desires and enriched with the light of faith; he had an enlightened spirit; he was highly gifted and he possessed a righteous soul; and he was given the titles, *Bārān-e-Raḥmat* [Rain of Mercy], Mubashar [Promised One], Bashir [Bearer of glad-tidings], and *Yadullāhi bi-Jalāl wa Jamāl* [Hand of God's Majesty and Grace], etc., but all these qualities, which were revealed to me through Divine revelations, pertained to his potential and were not dependant upon outward expression or manifestation. I am convinced that every child that comes into the world, whether it dies in infancy or reaches an old age, is different from all others on account of its natural and inherent powers. This can be clearly seen from the differences in their aptitude, behaviour, appearance and intellect. In a school, for instance, we find children who are extremely intelligent and clever and quick-witted and capable of absorbing knowledge with great speed, but their lives are at times cut short and they die young. On the other hand, there are many dull and unintelligent children who lack even basic human qualities; they drool at the mouth and look like savages, and yet live to an old age, and, on account of their natural inaptitude, leave the world no better off. These are facts of life that everyone can observe around him. There are children so perfectly endowed that they possess the purity of the saint, the intellect of the philosopher, and the enlightened spirit of the sage, and show

every sign of being highly talented, but they do not stay long in this transient world. And you must have seen many other children whose future is not at all promising, and a perceptive mind can see that they will turn out to be extremely mischievous, ignorant and impertinent if they live to maturity. It is evident from the Traditions that the Holy Prophet's^{sa} son Ibrāhīm^{ra}, who died at the age of sixteen months, was virtuous and righteous by nature; on the other hand, the Holy Quran itself testifies that the child killed by Ḥaḍrat Khid̄ar was by nature impure and wicked. The Islamic teaching about the children of the disbelievers who pass away in their infancy is also based on this very principle, and their natures are considered imperfect because **الْوَلَدُ سِرٌّ لَا يَبِيهٌ⁵**

Therefore, the names that were given to the deceased child in the revelation pertained to his righteous and virtuous nature and his inherent abilities, and if anyone stretches them to mean that the child would also live to an old age, he will only be acting out of malice, for I have never expressed any definite opinion upon this. Although the possibility that this child could be the Reformer was entertained in the light of these high qualities, it was still a doubtful matter and I never published it in any announcement.

In this context, I am particularly amazed at the conduct of the Hindus. They hear thousands of prophecies from their astrologers and soothsayers which turn out to be com-

⁵ Like father, like son. [Publishers]

pletely fake and erroneous, and yet their faith in them does not waver, and they attribute these mistakes to errors of calculation rather than doubt the science of astrology. But despite adhering to such ridiculous beliefs, they do not hesitate to launch malicious attacks on Divine prophecies even though they contain no obvious errors. This, however, does not come as a surprise to us, for these Hindus are the enemies of Islam and falsehood and deception are the only weapons they can wield against us. What does surprise us is the condition of the Muslims who do not hesitate to utter such absurdities despite all their claims to righteousness and piety and despite professing to follow the teachings of Islam. Even if they had come across an announcement in which I had surmised that the deceased boy could be the Promised Reformer and blessed with a long life, their knowledge and understanding of religion should have led them to conclude that such errors of judgement are not objectionable, because they are occasionally made by theologians as well as mystics, and even the greatest of Prophets are not immune from such errors. In this case, however, I never issued such an announcement. The opponents have acted in haste, like the proverbial traveller who removed his shoes miles before catching sight of the river.

It should be borne in mind that these few sentences about the condition of the Muslims have been written out of sympathy for them, so that they may discard their erroneous beliefs and reject ideas that are unfounded and have no basis in truth. Their doubts and misgivings regarding the death of Bashir Ahmad testify to their own lack of un-

derstanding, otherwise there were no grounds for any misgivings. I have reiterated time and again that I never issued any announcement categorically stating that this particular boy would be the Promised Reformer and live to an old age. Even though I myself was inclined towards this view on account of the apparent signs, I never issued any announcement to this effect, because, if my interpretation turned out to be wrong, it would have caused the general public, who are not conversant with the subtleties of Divine knowledge, to be misled. But ignorant people are still bent upon being misled and are ascribing to me statements that I have never made.

They do not seem to realize that their criticism is based solely upon the objection that I made an error in interpreting the prophecy. The first answer to this objection is that I never made any error in interpretation of which I was so sure that I would publish it as an announcement. Secondly, let me ask, for the sake of argument, that if a Prophet or Saint was to make a mistake in interpreting or explaining a prophecy, would this detract from his status as a Prophet or a Saint? Obviously not. People raise these objections only because they lack knowledge and awareness. Even the most obvious fact may seem dubious to some people due to the ignorance prevalent in this age and because of their lack of interest in religious knowledge, otherwise it is a commonly accepted fact that Prophets and Saints can make mistakes in explaining and identifying visions and prophecies which God has not fully elucidated, but these errors do not in any way detract

from status of these Prophets and Saints. The understanding of revelation is only a branch of knowledge, and the laws of nature governing other branches apply to this branch as well. There is no reason why it should be treated differently. The Prophets and Saints who are given this knowledge have also to contend with its drawbacks, errors of judgement being one of them. If such errors are objectionable, then this objection will have to be levelled against all Prophets, Saints and scholars.

It is also wrong to think that errors of interpretation detract from the glory and majesty of Divine prophecies, or render them useless for the people, or that they are harmful to religion and its followers. If there happens to be an error of judgement, it only occurs by way of trial in the interim period [between the announcement of the prophecy and its fulfilment], and it is followed by such manifestations of the truth and such signs of Divine support as if a new day has dawned, and all the criticisms and objections of the opponents are laid to rest. But, before that day comes, it is necessary for the Messengers of God to face great trials, and for their followers and the generation after them to be tried and tested, so that God may distinguish between the honest and the insincere, the steadfast and the wavering.

عشق اول سرکش و خونی بود
تا گریزد هر که بیرونی بود⁶

⁶ *Love, in its very essence, is wilful and bloodthirsty,
So that everyone who does not belong to it may keep away.* [Publishers]

The trials which initially confront Prophets and Saints and make them appear dishonoured despite their being loved and accepted by God do not come to disgrace them or destroy them or wipe their names off the face of this earth. Nor can this be their purpose, for how can God become the enemy of those who love Him and bring disgrace upon them? These trials, which appear with the ferocity of a roaring lion and cause darkness to descend all around, come upon God's chosen servants in order to raise them to the highest levels of acceptance and to open for them the finer dimensions of Divine knowledge. This has always been God's practice towards His servants, and it is substantiated by the entreaties made by David^{as} in the Psalms, by the Gospel's account of Jesus' heartrending supplications during his time of trials, and by the humble supplications of the Holy Prophet^{sa} that are recorded in the Holy Quran and the Traditions.⁷

⁷ One of the supplications which David made during his time of trials, and are recorded in the Psalms, is:

Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire where there is no standing. I am weary of my crying: mine eyes fail. They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head. Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake. They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I *was* the song of the drunkards. Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour. I looked for someone to take pity, but *there was* none. (Psalms 69)

The Gospels also contain an account of how the Messiah^{as} prayed and supplicated during his night of trial, and how he remained awake

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If past Prophets and Saints had not faced these difficulties, they would not have attained the high status they did through the blessings of their trials. Their ordeals set the seal on their perfect obedience, firm resolve, and readiness to offer the ultimate sacrifice. In the face of adversity they displayed wonderful steadfastness, complete obedience and true love. They were caught in terrible storms, enveloped by darkness, shaken by earthquakes, ridiculed, and considered liars and deceitful and dishonourable, and deserted by everyone. For a time, they were even deprived of the Divine support in which they put all their trust, and all at once He seemed to withdraw His sustenance, as though in anger, and left them in difficulty and sorrow, as though they had become deserving of His wrath. He appeared indifferent to them and did not seem to care for them in the least, and seemed instead to show concern for their enemies. Thus their trial was drawn out and one or-

all night and was overwhelmed by grief and anguish as if in the throes of death. All night he cried and beseeched his Lord to let the cup that he was destined to drink pass from him. But, despite his many prostrations, his prayer was not heard, because prayers that are offered during trials are not accepted.

We should also not forget the sufferings endured by our lord and master, pride of the Messengers, and seal of the Prophets, Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, during his times of trial. At one such time, he prayed, "My Lord! I complain to you of my weakness and confess my helplessness at your threshold. My humble state is known to You. I am ready to bear every hardship until You are pleased with me, and I have no strength other than You." [Author]

deal was followed by another, and trials came upon them like torrential rain in a dark night, but they did not waver in their resolve and did not lose heart. In fact, the greater the trials that beset them, the faster they moved forward; and the more they were battered, the stronger they became; and the bigger the difficulties and dangers they faced, the greater the bravery and courage they showed. But they finally succeeded in their trials with flying colours, and were blessed with complete success due to their perfect sincerity, and were bestowed the crown of honour. All the objections of the unenlightened then vanished like vapour as though they had never existed.

In short, Prophets and Saints are not free from trials, and have to face them more than others, but they always overcome them by the strength of their faith. Common people do not recognize them, just as they do not recognize God, and they are particularly vulnerable to deception when the loved ones of God are going through their period of trials, for they do not have the patience to wait and see what the future holds and are completely overwhelmed by the flood of deception. They fail to see that when God prunes a tree which He has Himself planted, He does not do so with the intention of destroying it, but only to help it grow and blossom so that it may yield as much fruit as possible. It is imperative for the inner purification and spiritual perfection of Prophets and Saints that they face these trials which serve as virtual uniforms by which these Divine soldiers are known. Whoever wins anything in a manner contrary to this, only succeeds to a degree and is not

granted complete success. It is highly unfortunate that man should readily yield to suspicion and presuppose that all those who claim to be from God are cheats and swindlers and seek to serve their own interests. In time such beliefs make people harbour doubts about sainthood, and once they have rejected sainthood, they begin to have reservations about the status of Prophethood, and when that, too, has been rejected, they start doubting the existence of God and think that perhaps the whole concept is a baseless fabrication and a superstition that has gradually found its way into people's minds.

O you who love truth with your heart and soul, and you who hunger and thirst for it! Do understand that belief in sainthood and its essentials is the *sine qua non* for passing through this chaotic world with one's faith intact. Sainthood helps to safeguard belief in Prophethood, and belief in Prophethood safeguards belief in God. Saints are like pegs that reinforce Prophethood, and Prophets are like nails that strengthen belief in the existence of God. Whoever fails to recognize a Saint will also not succeed in recognizing a Prophet, and he who does not recognize a Prophet will certainly fail to recognize God and is bound to be led astray. No amount of rational arguments and conventional knowledge will be of any avail to such a person.

Now, for the benefit of the people, let me also mention that the death of Bashir Ahmad was not wholly unexpected. Prior to his demise, God made it known to me, through His

revelation, that the boy had served his purpose⁸ and would

⁸ There are two important means through which God sends down His grace and showers His spiritual blessings:

(i) He tests people through trails and tribulations, and then opens the doors of His mercy and forgiveness to those who show forbearance and remain steadfast in the face of these trials. He says:

وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٩﴾ الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا
 إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿١٦٠﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ
 مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٦١﴾ * (Part 2)

i.e., It is Our practice that We cause the believers to pass through great trials and tribulations, and We bestow Our grace and mercy to those who persevere and We open for them the paths of progress.

(ii) The second means by which God's grace is manifested is that He sends His Messengers, Prophets, Imams, Saints and Khulafā, so that people may find the right path through their teachings, and attain salvation by following their example.

Now, through my progeny, God has willed to use both these means for manifesting His grace. First of all He sent Bashir so that He may bring glad-tidings to those believers who remain steadfast and may fulfil the connotation of his name Bashir [Bearer of Glad-tidings]. For the thousands of believers who, merely for the sake of Allah, shared the sorrow of his death, Bashir became a forerunner and an intercessor from God, and he brought them many hidden blessings. Divine revelation also made it clear that the Bashir who passed away did not come without a purpose, and that his death brought a new life to those who, solely for the sake of Allah, mourned his death and remained steadfast throughout this ordeal. In this manner Bashir became an intercessor for thousands of righteous and steadfast people; and the death of this innocent one, who came and went away, will atone for the sins of all such believers.

In order to manifest the second method for bestowing His grace,

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* Al-Baqarah, 2:156-158 [Publishers]

soon pass away. In fact, the revelation I received on the very day of his birth hinted, in a very subtle way, at his death and at the fact that he would become a source of great trial for the people. One such revelation was:

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاهُ شَاهِدًا وَ مُبَشِّرًا وَ نَذِيرًا. كَصَيِّبٍ مِّنَ
السَّمَاءِ فِيهِ ظُلُمَاتٌ وَ رَعْدٌ وَ بَرْقٌ. كُلُّ شَيْءٍ تَحْتَ قَدَمَيْهِ

i.e., We have sent this child as witness, bearer of glad tidings and a warner. He is like a big storm cloud that brings all kinds of darkness and thunder and lightening. All this rests under his feet, and it will be manifested once he raises them, i.e., when he passes away. The darkness here means the trials and tribulations which visited people after his demise. The ordeals they faced were like darkness and were a manifestation of the Quranic verse:

وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا⁹

God will send the second Bashir, as prophesized in the announcement of 10th July 1888, issued prior to the death of the first Bashir, in which God revealed to me that He will give me another Bashir who will be called Mahmood and will possess great resolve. يَخْلُقُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ. [Allah creates what He wills].

God also revealed to me that the prophecy of 20th February 1886 pointed to the birth of two virtuous sons. Up to the words, "blessed is he who comes from heaven", the revelation refers to Bashir the First, who was a source of spiritual blessings, and thereafter the revelation refers to Bashir the Second. [Author]

⁹ And when it becomes dark to them, they stand still.

—Al-Baqarah, 2:21 [Publishers]

The order of the revealed words shows that the passing away of the child was to be followed first by darkness, and then by thunder and lightening. This is exactly how the prophecy is being fulfilled. Bashir's demise was immediately followed by the darkness of trial and tribulation, and this will now be followed by thunder and lightning. It is inevitable that the promised thunder and lightning should appear in the same way as did the darkness; and when that light comes it will remove all the dark thoughts from people's minds and hearts, and disperse all the objections of the ignorant and the spiritually dead.

The afore-mentioned revelation, as soon as it was received, was related to hundreds of people, including Maulawī Abū Sa'īd Muhammad Hussain Batālwi and other eminent people. If our supporters and our opponents closely ponder over the contents of the revelation, they will realize that the darkness had been decreed by God. He announced its coming through His revelation and made it clear that both darkness and light lay beneath the feet of this child, and that when he would raise them, i.e. pass away, both would be manifested. People who have witnessed the darkness! Do not be perplexed, rather be happy and rejoice, for light will soon follow. Just as Bashir's demise fulfilled this prophecy, it also fulfilled another prophecy, mentioned in the announcement of 20th February, that some of my children would die in infancy.

Finally, let it be clear that I have complete and absolute trust in my Lord to take care of my affairs, and I am not

bothered whether people are with me or against me, whether they accept my claim or reject it, whether they like me or hate me. Disregarding everyone, and considering everything, except God, to be as good as dead, I carry on with my mission. There are some from among our own people and belonging to our own religion who look disdainfully at what I am doing, but I make allowances for them knowing that what has been revealed to me has not been revealed to them, and the thirst that I feel has not been felt by them.

كُلُّ يَعْْمَلُ عَلَىٰ شَاكِلَتِهِ¹⁰

At this juncture, I would also like to mention that I have learned through some articles written by certain scholars that they do not approve of my revealing to other people the spiritual blessings and heavenly signs which I experience and which find their culmination in the acceptance of prayer and in Divine revelations and visions. They argue that all this is based on guesswork and surmise, and proves to be more harmful than beneficial. They also say that these phenomena are more or less common to all human beings, some even going so far as to suggest that they are experienced by all people in equal measure. They tend to think that religion and piety and establishing a relationship with God have nothing to do with such experiences, and that these are natural abilities common to

¹⁰ Everyone acts according to his own way.—Banī Isrā'īl, 17:85

all people. Whether one is a believer or a disbeliever, pious or impious, one will possess these abilities more or less equally. This is their stated point of view and it clearly betrays the weakness of their intellect, their superficial thinking and their lack of knowledge. But when we go on to analyze their condition with the aid of true insight, we find that negligence and worldliness has completely eroded their ability to understand the matters of faith. Like lepers whose limbs begin to rot in the advanced stage of the disease, their worldliness has caused their spiritual faculties to fall into decay. They do not at all reflect upon religious truths and verities and are given to mockery and ridicule, doubt and suspicion. They are indeed so cut off from the truth, and so averse to seeking true knowledge, that they never once ask themselves why they have come into this world and what is the purpose of their existence. They indulge, night and day, in the pursuit of material things and have lost all consciousness of how far they have strayed from the truth. Even more unfortunate is the fact that they take their own fatal illness for health, and look down upon those who are blessed with true well-being. They do not value the excellences of Sainthood and of nearness to God, and have given in to hopelessness and despondency. Should they continue in this state, they are in serious danger of losing their faith even in Prophethood.

The fact that some ulema have reached this appalling state and consider these spiritual blessings to be impossible or doubtful is not because they have any personal experience

in this regard. In fact, they are not even inclined to go through such an experience and have never allowed themselves any opportunity to form an opinion based on a comprehensive analysis, nor do they wish to do so. Their suspicions are based, not on any of their own investigation, but only on the objections my prejudiced opponents have levelled against my two prophecies.¹¹ Consequently, they

¹¹ These are the objections: In my announcement of 8th April 1886, I published the prophecy that a boy would be born to me, but I also wrote in unambiguous terms that the boy may either be born from the current pregnancy or a future one. However, in order to expose the inherent evil and injustice of my opponents, God gave me a girl from the first pregnancy and a boy from the next, and the essence of my prophecy was thus fulfilled. But the opponents, in keeping with their eternal practice, adopted a mischievous attitude and argued why a boy had not been born from the first pregnancy. I told them that no such stipulation was mentioned in the prophecy, rather it had been stated that the boy may be born from the next pregnancy, and this prophecy was unequivocally fulfilled. Such criticism is, in fact, a kind of deception which no right-minded person will accept.

The second objection made by my opponents was that the boy, whose birth had been prophesied in the announcement of 8th April 1886, died in infancy. I have already answered this objection in detail, and the bottom line is that I never wrote in any of my announcement that the deceased boy would be blessed with a long life and would become the Promised Reformer. On the contrary, the announcement of 20th February 1886 contains the prophecy that some of my boys will die in infancy. Consider, therefore, whether the demise of this child has fulfilled this prophecy or not. In fact, most of the revelations that I published pointed to his demise. The announcement of 20th February 1886, for instance, contained the words, "A beautiful and pure boy comes as your guest," which clearly show that the boy would die

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have accepted a set of beliefs about the blessings of saint-hood and nearness to God that is similar to positivism and naturalism. They should at least have considered whether my opponents had forwarded any proof against me, and if there was no such proof and it was all mere empty talk, then was it in keeping with the norms of reason and faith that they allowed themselves to be influenced by such baseless slander? Even if we suppose, for the sake of argument, that I did make an error in interpreting a Divine revelation and published it in a formal announcement, no reasonable person should consider this objectionable, for even Prophets are not free from making such errors. Let me add that, so far, I have been blessed by God with more than

young, because a guest is one who comes only to leave after a few days and not one who comes to stay permanently and bids farewell to others. The same announcement also contained the words, "He is completely free from *rijz* (sin)", and these also testify to his early demise. No one should be misled into thinking that this part of the prophecy is about the Promised Reformer, for Divine revelation has made it amply clear that it relates to the deceased child. The prophecy about the Promised Reformer begins with the words, "He has with him the Grace of God, and it will be manifested with his coming." The Promised Reformer has been named Faql, and Mahmood, and Bashir, the Second, and also Faql-e-'Umar. The coming of the Promised Reformer had to be deferred until this Bashir was born and was taken back from us, because all future events had been placed under his feet. Bashir, the First, who has passed away, was in fact a forerunner for Bashir, the Second, and this is why they were both mentioned together in the same prophecy.

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seven thousand true visions and revelations, and it is an ongoing process with spiritual wonders raining down upon me, night and day. Fortunate is he who surrenders himself to this Divine dispensation and avails himself of heavenly bounties, and there is none more unfortunate than he who remains oblivious to these blessings and makes it his habit to level baseless objections and express uninformed opinions. I warn such people, for the sake of Allah, that they

Let fair-minded people judge whether I have made any serious error in interpreting these prophecies. It is true that I spoke of some excellent inherent qualities of the deceased child on the basis of revelations, and I still do, but it is unanimously substantiated by all religions that children do possess diverse qualities regardless of whether they die in infancy or live to an advanced age. No sage or scholar can deny this and there is no room for any reasonable person to be misled on this account. As for the ignorant, they have always been misled, as, for instance, were the children of Israel on account of Moses' prophecies. He had said that a great punishment would come upon the Pharaoh, but they saw no such thing happening, and it seemed that they were being punished instead, for they were now being forced to toil for the whole day while previously they had worked half the time. What manner of liberation was this [they asked]! The fact was that the hard labour was only meant as trial for them, and it was the Pharaoh who was destined to be defeated, but those ignorant and hasty people, seeing that their unrealistic expectations were not quick to materialize, began criticizing Moses^{as} and harbouring doubts about him. They said, "Moses and Aaron! Would that God treat you as you have treated us."

The ignorance and haste shown by Judas Iscariot also deserves attention, for he, too, misunderstood the Messiah's prophecies. He had been led to think that Jesus would become king and would bestow high offices upon his disciples, but when this did not happen and

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have estranged themselves from the truth and from understanding the truth by giving in to such ideas. If, according to their assertion, it were indeed true that there is nothing special or unique about visions and revelations, and they cannot be considered a criterion for distinguishing between a common man and a chosen one, or between a believer and a non-believer, then those who seek God would surely be devastated. But let me assure them that Islam possesses this wonderful spiritual quality that whoever follows its teaching, truthfully and sincerely, is blessed with special Divine communion, and experiences in his own self the signs of acceptance that other people never can. This is an inescapable reality and countless righteous people become privy to it through their own experience. But only those can attain these heights who truly and sincerely follow the Holy Prophet^{sa} and, casting off their earthly garb, don the heavenly robes. In other words, they kill their earthly pas-

none of the prophecies was fulfilled, and the disciples instead faced poverty and depravation, he decided that it would be better to fill his belly by siding with Jesus' enemies. This proved to be the means of his downfall, for the Messiah's prophecies were ultimately fulfilled.

Has any Prophet ever been defeated by the attacks of foolish and naïve people? If not, why should we fear that this will happen now, and why should we bring God's holy mission to a halt?

Let it be remembered, once and for all, that all those who call themselves Muslims and profess the *kalima* [Oneness of God], but are quick to harbour doubts and suspicions in their hearts, will be dishonoured and disgraced just like the ignorant Jews and like Judas Iscariot. *Reflect, O men of wisdom.* [Author]

sions and enter into a new life of Divine servitude. Even Muslims who are weak of faith have no affinity with these godly ones, let alone comparing them to disbelievers and sinners. Their condition is only revealed to those seekers after truth who remain in their company for some time. It was with this in mind that I sent letters and announcements to leaders of various sects inviting them to [come and stay with me and] test my claim. If they had been sincere in their search for truth, they would have come in earnest, but, as it was, none of them responded to my invitation, and whenever any of my prophecies was fulfilled, they tried to make it look dubious. If our own Muslim ulema have such hesitation in accepting this truth, then there is no point in inviting others to it. Let the ulema, who include eminent intellectuals and scholars, come and test my claim first. If they patiently and honestly spend some time in my company, they will surely find the truth. If it turns out that my claim is false, I will repent at their hands, otherwise I am hopeful that God will open for them the door to repentance and forgiveness. Their admonitions to me will only be meaningful if, after the publication of this writing, they put my claim to the test and their views are substantiated beyond any shadow of doubt. But at the moment their admonitions carry no meaning.

The blindness of these ulema is indeed pitiable. I can see that the powerful surge of contemporary logic and philosophy has besieged their hearts and minds. They put too much emphasis on these forms of learning, consider them to be sufficient for the perfection of their faith and ridi-

cule spiritual blessings in a manner that is not worthy of them. I also believe that they do not do this superficially, but because they actually believe it to be true. Their innate weakness has caused them to succumb to this disease, for they do not possess the light of truth and are full of empty words. They seem so certain of their own views, and forward them with such zeal that, if it were possible, they would even drag the enlightened ones back into darkness. They are very eager for the physical victory of Islam, but are completely unaware of what the true victory of Islam stands for.

The true victory of Islam, as is evident from the word 'Islam' [submission] itself, lies in our completely surrendering our selves to God and freeing ourselves of our egos and our passions. No idol, whether it is the idol of our desires, our intentions, or the idol of creature worship, should stand in our way, and we should submit ourselves entirely to the will of God. After reaching this state of *fanā* [self-annihilation], we will attain *baqā* [the life of eternity] which will give our eyes a new light, our minds a new brilliance, and our lives a new passion; and we will become a wholly new being and the same Eternal God will become for us a new God. This is the true victory, and one aspect of it is Divine communion. If Muslims do not achieve this victory in this age, mere intellectual victory will lead them nowhere. I am convinced that the day of this victory is close at hand. God will Himself cause this light to shine forth and shall have mercy on His hapless servants.

Propagation

Another message that I wish to convey to the people at large, and to my Muslim brothers in particular, is that I have been commanded to receive an oath of allegiance (*Bai'at*) from seekers after truth who wish to acquire true faith and purity, and yearn to find the path to Allah's love, and want to give up their foul, slothful and false existence. Whosoever finds in himself the willingness to do this must come to me. I will be their comforter and will do my best to ease their burden. God will bless them through my prayers and my attention, provided they are ready heart and soul to abide by His conditions. This is a Divine command which I have hereby conveyed. The actual words of the revelation in Arabic are as follows:

إِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ. وَاصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحْيِنَا.
الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ. يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ¹²

Peace be on him who follows the guidance.

Ghulam Ahmad

1st December 1888

¹² When thou hast determined a matter then trust in Allah and build the Ark under Our eyes and according to Our instructions. Those who enter into covenant with thee enter into a covenant with Allah. Allah's Hand is above their hands. [Publishers]

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