

لحمده و نصلى على رسوله الكريم

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

A LIVING RELIGION AND A LIVING PRAYER

by

Hazrat Mirza GHULAM AHMAD

The Promised Messiah & Mahdi

1963

www.aail.org

Published by

**THE AHMADIYYA ANJUMAN ISHAAT-I-ISLAM,
LAHORE. (W. Pakistan)**

A LIVING RELIGION AND A LIVING PRAYER

by

HAZRAT MIRZA GHULAM AHMAD

THE DIVINE REFORMER OF THIS AGE

A study of different religions of the world reveal the fact that, except Islam, all of them lack perfection. Not that their imperfection lies in their very origin ; but after the advent of Islam, they have been deprived of the Divine support. They have, therefore, become like a garden having no gardener and for the watering and clearing of which there is no arrangement, thus leading to its deterioration. The fruit-giving trees have dried up and thorny bushes and pernicious shrubs have taken their place. The spirit has died down and only the letter remains. But not so in the case of Islam ; it was divinely ordained to be evergreen and, therefore, at the commencement of every century after the Prophet of Islam, the Almighty God watered it anew, and thus saved it from withering away or losing its freshness. Although whenever a man of God was raised centennially for the regeneration of the world, ignorant men opposed him and his efforts at reforming their corrupt customs and institutions which had taken firm roots, yet God did not change His habit until in this age of the final struggle between truth and error, and, finding the Muslims in a state of

remissness, He once again remembered His promise and breathed new life into the faith of Islam at the commencement of the fourteenth century of Hijra and the seventh of the last thousand of the present cycle of the world. On the other hand, since the time of the Prophet of Islam, other faiths have not been regenerated and therefore have all become a dead letter, devoid of spirituality. Corrupt religious practices and notions have taken firm root in them like dirt in a cloth which is never washed. Men who had no taste for matters spiritual and whose disobedient souls had not been purified of the doers of earthliness, following their own selfish cravings, their faiths to such an extent that they are not their real selves. Let us take Christianity an example. What pious principles it was based upon! Though, compared with the teachings of the Holy Qur'an, the teachings of Jesus Christ appear to be imperfect because of the fact that then human faculties had not completely developed and, hence, the time for a perfect guidance had not arrived, they were quite in keeping with the requirements of the time and embodied excellent principles of moral and spiritual growth and pointed the way to the old Testament had guided earlier.

But after the death of Jesus, the Christians set up a new God for them selves, of whom no trace was found in the books of Moses and the prophets, and who was quite unknown to the Israelites. Faith in the new God overturned the whole scheme of the Old Testament doctrines. All the directions, which had been given by the

prophets of God for many centuries for attaining purity of life and obtaining true salvation from the bondage of sin, were overthrown, and purification from sin was based on the monstrous theory that Jesus was in fact God and that he himself chose to die a shameful and accursed death on the cross in order to give salvation to the world. But the Christians did not stop here. They went further still and abolished many of the Old Testament laws which had been given for all times. In short, the Christian religion has undergone a complete metamorphosis and is so completely changed that if Jesus himself were to come back, he would not recognise in Christianity the religion which he had taught and preached. It is astonishing indeed that men who had been strictly enjoined to regulate their conduct by the laws of the Old Testament forsook that sacred Book altogether. For instance, the Gospels nowhere says that the prohibition against taking the flesh of swine was repealed by Jesus or that circumcision which was required by the law was abolished by him. How could principles be introduced into religion regarding which Jesus gave no directions? But it had been ordained that a universal religion, viz. Islam, should be established upon the earth, and the corruption of Christianity served as a sign of its advent.

It is also an established fact that Hinduism had met a similar fate before the appearance of Islam. Idol-worship had come into vogue throughout India. And it is in consequence of this

corruption that God who, in the exercise of His attributes, need no matter, is presented by followers of the Arya Samaj is in need of rational aids in his creative activities. Error followed error, and as a necessary result they had to admit another revolting notion that the particles of matter and the souls are self-existent and eternal like God Himself. Had the Arya Samajist's given a little thought to this question, they would have discovered the error of their belief. For, if God stands in need of materials in exercising His attribute of creation like mortals, then He must also like men stand in need of resources in His attributes of seeing, hearing, etc. The power of hearing in man depends upon the transmission of sound by the waves of air, and the power of seeing in him depends upon the existence of light. Does God too then need air and light to hear and see, and is He like mortals dependent upon these things? If He does not, as the Arya Samajists will be obliged to admit, then it is equally certain that He does not need materials for the exercise of His attribute of creation. In short, it is a false logic which attribute to the Divine Being a weakness and dependence like that to be met with in mortals. In fact, such a belief involves the likening of Divine powers and attributes to the powers and attributes of man. Man is, no doubt, not able to make something out of nothing, but to judge of the power of God in accordance with that of mortals is a great error. Man is a finite being and God is infinite, and by the power of the infi-

nitensness of His existence, He can bring other things into existence. Such is the mighty power of His Godhead. If he too like men had depended upon other things in the exercise of His power, He could not have been anything more than a mortal. Is there any one who can resist His will or withstand His power? Is He, the Mighty God, unable to create the earth and the heavens in the twinkling of an eye if He so wills? This was not the belief of those ancient Hindus whose learning went hand in hand with spirituality, and for whom false logic had on charm. Such a belief gains currency only on account of an estrangement from the Divine Being, which is, in other words, the absence of spirituality.

When Almighty God saw that the world was steeped in iniquities, transgressions and errors, He raised me to bring it out from this state of degradation and commanded me to preach the truth and reclaim the world from the evils into which it had fallen. So, exactly at the time when the thirteenth century of Hijra had come to a close and the world had entered upon the fourteenth century, I announced my mission in obedience to the Divine commandment and made it known to the people through my words and writings that I was the Reformer promised to appear at the commencement of the fourteenth century for the reformation of the faith, so that I should re-establish upon the earth the faith which had vanished from its face, and that, being strengthened by God, I might draw the

world by the powerful attraction of His hand to true virtue, piety and righteousness and remove the prevailing errors in doctrine and practice. A few years after this I was informed in clear and plain revelations from the Divine Being that I was the very Messiah who had been promised from the beginning for the last days, and that I was also the last Mahdi who was ordained to appear at a time when Islam would be in decline and errors would prevail, and who being guided in the right path by Almighty God Himself, was destined to offer heavenly truth anew to the world, and the glad tidings of whose advent had been given by the Holy Prophet (may peace and the blessings of God be upon him) thirteen centuries ago.

Listen, O Earth ! and bear witness, O Heaven ! that I have received inspiration from On High, and have found access to the Divine mysteries. I have been sent in the early part of this century in order that I may restore Islam to its original purity, and as a judge remove the differences that are tearing asunder the Muslim sects, and armed with the weapons of heavenly signs, destroy all false principles, and bring about a spiritual transformation in the whole world.

Another point which deserves to be noticed is that the revelations of all the Muslim saints fix the appearance of the Messiah at the commencement of the fourteenth century of Hijra, and not a single revelation takes it further.

There is, moreover, an authentic tradition to the effect that a Spiritual Revivalist will be raised among the Muslims at the commencement of every century, and since the Messiah will also be a Spiritual Revivalist, therefore if he does not appear in the earlier part of the century his advent shall have to be delayed for another century, an idea not only repugnant as suggesting the decline of Islam for another century but also opposed to all prophetic writings.

The advent of a Reformer at the commencement of every century is admitted by all, and it is further admitted that the Promised Messiah will also come as a Reformer. But no one can point out where the Reformer is who ought to have appeared at the commencement of the fourteenth century of Hijra. The eclipse of the sun and the moon in the month of Ramazan was the sign fixed for the advent of Mahdi (another name for the same Reformer), and more than eight years have elapsed since that sign was seen on the heaven,* but no other Mahdi can be shown. If it be said that though the sign has appeared, yet the person whose advent it denotes will appear after some time, there would be great difficulties, for in that case any number of men may claim Mahdship and accordingly the advantage of the sign. The heaven has shown mighty sign, but people do not care for it.

* The article was written in 1904. The eclipses took place in the months of March and April 1904—Publisher.

The prophets had also spoken of another sign to appear after the eclipse, a heavy disaster which was to befall the world. This has appeared in the form of plague which has wrought havoc in the country. It has destroyed hundreds of thousands of souls, and who knows what destruction it may yet bring about, but people have not recognised him whose sign it is. The heaven and the earth have borne testimony to my truth, but their testimony has been rejected. God is jealous and He will show His jealousy because His signs are denied. He will not leave this disobedience unpunished. Both the Qur'an and the traditions speak of another sign, a new conveyance which was to replace the camels. Thus the Holy Quran says : *واذ العشار عطلت* "When the camels will fall into disuse," while a tradition says : *يترك القاص فلا يسعى عليها* "Verily the camels will be given up and they will not be used for riding upon." This sign has been brought to fulfilment in a wonderful manner, so much so that even in the deserts of Arabia where camels have not been dispensed with from time immemorial, railways are under construction and thus camels will soon fall into disuse there, fulfilling the great prophecy. Could I bring about the fulfilment of these signs in support of my claim by my power? Had I any control over the solar system would have brought about the eclipse of the sun and the moon in accordance with the prophecy? Or could I create the germs of plague in order to fulfil the prophecy con-

cerning this epidemic? Or was it at my instance that pilgrimage to Makka was obstructed? All the signs fixed for the advent of the Messiah have been brought to fulfilment by Almighty God Who has control over the system of the universe, and every argument has been produced, but there is still the same denial.

The wrath of God descends upon the people who reject the Divine Messenger who is raised in the beginning of the century with clear and conclusive arguments in support of his claim, deny his signs on account of their own meanness and narrow-mindedness, injure him, persecute him, abuse him, declare him an heretic, mischievously plan his death and falsely and unjustly drag him into law-courts.

No one can take you to heaven but he who comes from heaven. If you knew that the fresh and certain Word of God is the true remedy for your diseases, you would not have rejected him who came with this blessing in the beginning of the century.

A Glorious Prophet came into the world for the regeneration of mankind i.e. the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may God pour His choicest blessings upon him). And he called people to the path of the true and living God Whom the world had quite forgotten and forsaken, but in the present age he has been held in such contempt and disdain and is abused to such an extent that there is no parallel to

it in any other period of history. Almighty God has, moreover, sent at the commencement of the fourteenth century of Hijra, a servant of His, i.e. the writer, that he may bear witness to the truth, glory and grandeur of the Great Prophet, and preach the unity of God and glorify Him, but he also has been abused and anathematised. This is the reason of the calamities that have befallen the world in this age. There is no fear of God in the hearts of men, there is much of vain talking and bubbling but as to real worth, the purity of heart, there is none. There is a great ado about society, and national considerations solely occupy the hearts which are totally devoid of every impression of the glory and majesty of God.

It should be further borne in mind that for proof of the blessings and fruits of Islam stated above, we do not refer the seekers after truth only to the past. Islam is not a dead religion, and we are not compelled to say that the blessings of Islam are left behind. It is in fact the unique excellence of the holy faith of Islam that its blessings are unbroken and continuous. It not only offered its blessings in the past but offers similar blessings even now. The world ever stands in need of blessings and heavenly signs, and it is absurd to suppose that it stood in need of such signs in the past but can do without them now. Man is a weak creature, and walks blindly until he is shown traces of the heavenly kingdom; and his faith

is a blind faith until he witnesses the wonderful signs of the existence and power of God. The signs shown in a previous age are of no avail in a later age unless they are renewed. The narration of stories of wonder displayed in the past can never produce the conviction which signs witnessed by a man himself can do. Every new century is the inauguration of a new era and the beginning, as it were, of a new world. The God of Islam, Who is the true God, therefore, manifests new signs in each new world; and in the commencement of every new century, especially when the world goes astray from probity and righteousness and is involved in darkness, He raises a vicegerent of the Holy Prophet in the looking-glass of whose nature the person of the Holy Prophet is imaged forth. The representative so raised shows the excellences of the Holy Prophet whom he follows and establishes the charge against his opponents by truth, by showing the reality and by exposing them; by truth, because he shows that the Prophet whom they rejected was a true Prophet, and shows the heavenly signs for his truth; by showing the reality, because he solves all difficulties in the comprehension of the religion of the Prophet, and removes all doubts that are entertained with respect to it, and refutes all objections that are urged against it and by exposing them, because he rends asunder all the veils under which they hide themselves and lays bare before the world their folly in not comprehending nice points of

religious truths, their love of remissness, ignorance and darkness, and their being forsaken by God and cut off from communion with Him. The perfect man who is raised for this purpose is a recipient of Divine revelation, and he is purified and blessed and has his prayer accepted by God. He shows with clearness that God exists and that He is powerful over all. Sees, Hears and Knows everything, and regulates affairs according to His will, that prayers are in fact accepted and have an efficacy, and that the men of God actually show heavenly signs. He is not only himself rich in Divine knowledge but his appearance brings about a life in the faith of the people. The heavenly signs which were rejected and scoffed at by people as opposed to the laws of Nature and contrary to reason, or, if treated with respect, were considered at the most to be stories, are not only accepted as truths at his appearance because of their renewal at his hands, but the absurdity of the former position is also fully realised. It is then clearly seen and even regretted that what was taken to be wisdom was really folly, and that which was considered to be knowledge of the laws of Nature was in fact ignorance. In short, the holy one raised by God falls like a flame upon the world and gives a light to everyone according to his capacity. He is at first tried, thrown into afflictions, persecuted on all sides, abused and injured by all possible means, and every attempt is made to bring him to disgrace, but as he has with

him the argument of truth and Divine assistance, he overcomes all difficulties and vanquishes his enemies, and the rays of the light of his truth are made to pierce into the world by a powerful hand. When Almighty God sees that the earth has rejected him, He commands the holy host of heaven to bear testimony to his truth. Therefore, a clear and bright testimony comes down for his sake from heaven in the form of extraordinary heavenly signs, acceptance of prayer and the disclosure through him of deep religious truth and verities. This heavenly testimony gives sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, and the power of speech to the dumb. There are many who are drawn at that time to the truth ; but blessed are they who accept him previously, for they, on account of their strength of faith, are granted the dignity of the *siddiqs* (the truthful servants of God). But this is the grace of God, and He bestows it upon whom He wills.

To complete the argument that Islam is a living religion, I deem it my bounden duty to state further that finding the world involved in utter darkness and plunged in the depth of ignorance, remissness, unbelief and *shirk*, and finding faith, sincerity and righteousness vanishing away, Almighty God has raised me to re-establish in the world the purity of doctrine and practice, and the purity of morals and faith, and to save Islam from the hostile attacks of those who, with the weapons of a false philosophy

and science, lawlessness, atheism, etc., are trying to damage this impregnable rock. It was exactly the time when Islam stood in need of heavenly assistance, and this Almighty God has vouchsafed by raising me. The general prevalence of error, which is to be witnessed in this age, has taken place in fulfilment of the prophecies relating to the appearance of the Anti-christ, as foretold by the Prophet of God. The basis of these errors has been laid by Christianity, which inculcates the most fatal error. It was, therefore, necessary that the revivalist or representative of the Holy Prophet appearing at the commencement of this century, come after the name of Christ, for the foundation of the present evil has been laid by the followers of Christ. It has been disclosed to me in a revelation that the soul of Jesus being infoamed of the poison with which Christianity affects the spiritual atmosphere, came into motion for a spiritual re-advent into the world. Having thus come into motion, and finding his own people spreading destruction in the world, the soul of Jesus required that one resembling him in all points and having the same spirit and character should appear as his representative upon earth, there being such a spiritual likeness between the two that they may be considered as one. So, according to the promise which Almighty God had already made, he raised one resembling Jesus and in him was manifested the resolution, character and spirituality of Jesus. He

and the Messiah were so closely united as to be considered as being of the same essence. The attractions of Jesus made his heart their habitation and fulfilled their requirement through him. In this sense, therefore, his personality was considered as the personality of Christ himself, for the characteristics of Christ were manifested in him and this manifestation was metaphorically expressed in spiritual language as the second advent of Christ. It is a deep spiritual law that the characteristics of some one of the perfect ones who have passed away, are imaged in some living perfect man, and the unity of their ideas makes the connection so strong that the appearance of the latter is looked upon by the former as his own appearance. The person whose soul is thus united with the soul of a past saint becomes, as it were, an instrument for the manifestation of the will of the latter, and the will of the one is made by Almighty God identical with the will of the other. In short, it is a Divine Law that the former prophets reappear in the world in this manner. The second advent of Elias in the person of John took place according to this law, and if this law is not recognised, the Messiahship of Jesus would be seriously in question.

OBJECT OF MUSLIM PRAYERS

There exists a great misunderstanding with respect to the nature of the prayers enjoined by the Muslim Law. The prayer of a Muslim is a prayer in the truest and highest sense of

the term, a devout supplication to Almighty God and reverential expression of the soul's sincerest desires before its Maker. But on account of the great ignorance that prevails among the Muslims, prayers are looked upon as a burdensome duty. Does Almighty God stand in need of imposing tax upon His creatures? Certainly not, for He is above all needs and able to dispense with all creatures. Almighty God has commanded men to pray to Him and utter His praise, not because He stands in need of it but for their own good, for only thus can they attain the great object for which man has been created. It grieves me to see that men have no love for piety, righteousness and the worship of God. The true devotion of the heart has degenerated into a lifeless ceremonial. The love of God is on the wane and the heavenly enjoyment in His worship is nowhere felt. There is taste and flavour in everything and most of all in prayers and in the worship of the Divine Being. But as the sweetest thing would excite a bitter taste in the mouth of one whose organs of taste are morbid, similarly prayers and worship do not afford any pleasure or enjoyment to those who are spiritually sick. The object of man's life has been described in the Holy Quran to be the worship of God, and it is impossible that man should have been so created as to feel a pleasure in everything except in that which was the aim of his life. Nay, it is here that he should experience the highest bliss, and if he does not, he should

clearly understand that some morbidity affects his spiritual conditions and he ought to seek for the proper remedy.

We see it in our every day experience that the things that have been created for the benefit of man possess a certain attraction for him. Are not delicious articles of food and drink pleasant to the taste, beautiful objects and sights and charming scenes pleasing to the eye and sweet sounds and soft and melodious tones pleasing to the ear. What other argument is needed to show that the observance of religious duties must afford pleasure and enjoyment to a man? Again, man and woman were created as helpmates to each other and the one was consorted with the other not by compulsion but by means of attraction placed in each for the other. The coming together of the man and the woman with the object of the procreation has thus been brought about by the pleasure which each finds in the union, and the purpose could hardly have been accomplished without it. The enjoyment which is found in the sexual connection and which is the incentive to men to propagate their kind, has such a powerful attraction that ignorant men have taken it to be the object of the sexual connection and have lost sight of the real object, *viz.*, procreation. The object with which the close connection between man and woman was brought about was no doubt the propagation of their kind, and the enjoyment found in the connection was only a step to the attainment of that object.

The true and eternal union which affords the highest bliss is the union of man with God. It gives a pleasure which is far above every pleasure of the senses. But the unfortunate man who does not find any pleasure in this union and who regards the worship of God as a tax, has not his spiritual faculties sound and in a regular order, and is like the sick man who finds no pleasant savour in sweet things, or the blind man who finds no charm in beautiful objects or the impotent man who finds no pleasure in the sexual union. But, alas for the spiritual lethargy which so generally prevails. The sick man who finds no enjoyment in his food consults the doctor and incurs every expenditure for the cure of his disease, and the impotent man who is deprived of the pleasure of sexual union is ready sometimes to commit suicide but the hardened heart which finds no pleasure in the worship of God does nothing to heal itself and to open itself for the Divine blessings. Why does not this great grief gnaw his soul? He is mad after the pleasure of this world but there is no thirst in his soul for eternal bliss, no yearning after heavenly enjoyment. Does he think that temporal pleasures can be restored to him when he has been deprived of them, but that Almighty God has made no provision for spiritual and eternal pleasure? God has certainly made such provision, but for those who seek it and try for it as they try for the remedies of physical diseases.

The Holy Quran has on one occasion compared the faithful to virtuous women and this simile has a deep significance. The close connection which exists between man and woman serves to exemplify the connection between God and his faithful servant. The union of woman with man is blessed and fruitful if it is characterized by love and concord. Discord and disagreement, on the other hand, are not only fatal to the peace of the household, leading to the corruption of both the man and the woman and to disease which impair the health of the pair permanently, but also render the object of the union a certain failure. Any disturbance in the true union is productive of immense harm and mischief. Such is also the case of the spiritual union of man with God. The person who cuts asunder his connection from his heavenly master, has his heart cankered and vitiated. His suffering is very great and knows no end. Again as there is pleasure in the sexual union of man and woman for the production of new life, so there is bliss in the spiritual union of man and God for an immortal life. The bliss that is felt in the spiritual union far transcends all earthly and material enjoyments, and has nothing comparable to it in the pleasures of the senses. If the men of this world who are given to the worldly pleasures taste but once of this heavenly bliss, they would forget all their former pleasures for its sake. But what is to be deplored is the ignorance

of most men as regards the source of this heavenly enjoyment. Their genuflexions and prostrations are not accompanied with the bowing down of the soul on Divine threshold and hence their prayers are meaningless movements of the body. They perform their religious exercises with an absent mind, and their prayers have no other significance than sitting and rising alternately. It grieves me still more when I see people resorting to prayers that they may be seen of men and revered and honoured among them; and their insincere prayers make them successful in the attainment of this mean object. Ah, ignorant soul! they never think that if their false prayers can make them honourable in the eyes of men, would not true and sincere prayers make them honourable in the sight of God?

In short, indifference to prayers and remissness in them are due only to an ignorance of the pleasure and enjoyment with which true and sincere prayers are attended. In large cities, villages in the mad race for wealth and in the heat of business, people can hardly find time to bow down in submission before their Master, and those that go through the external acts of devotion have their hearts in their business and not in the prayers which they offer. There is hardly anyone who can bow down his head in true submission and with his whole heart and soul. What is the cause of this spiritual lethargy and indifference to religion? Nothing but that people are unaware of the heavenly en-

joyment of prayers and have never tasted of, their true bliss. There is a vast majority of people who would hate the call to prayer because at that time they happen to be engaged in some business of theirs. Such men are to be pitied for their ignorance. They should pray to God with true zeal and sincerity that they may be made to taste of the enjoyment of prayers as they have been granted senses with which they feel the physical pleasures. If they drink of the pure fountain but once, they will not forget its sweetness as long as they live. But as long as they are unaware of its beauties, it is hateful in their eye. To get up early in the morning from a warm bed when sweet slumber is soothing the senses to rest and to wash oneself in the cold season are heavy inconveniences if unattended with any compensatory benefit.

The question then arises, how to obtain this pleasure in prayers without which they are but an inconvenient burden? The drunkard goes on drinking and takes one cup after another until he gets intoxicated. He does not get tired with the first cup and leave drinking because it has not intoxicated him. He sets before himself the one object of getting the pleasure of intoxication and devotes himself wholly to it. The man who has a longing for the divine joy which is to be found in prayers should have his attention and thoughts engrossed with it and all his faculties applied to its attainment. The desire to get at it should cause an unrest to his

soul and inspire it with true zeal and sincerity for its possession. In saying his prayers he should also aim at true holiness which is the necessary consequence of sincere prayers, for the Holy Quran says :

“Verily good deeds, i.e. prayers, drive away evils.”

The deep and Divine delight which prayers afford and the true holiness which they effect, should be the objects which a man should set before himself in saying his prayers, and he should further pray to God that his prayers may be like those of the true and faithful servants of God and be blessed with like blessing.

Some men think that prayer may be resorted to, but prayer means only worship of God and it is a deed of merit which will be rewarded hereafter. This is a serious error. Every devotion which is devoid of true spirituality and every reward which is vainly looked for at some future moment, is a worthless thing or an idle hope. Sincere worship of God and true reward make their light and blessings felt in this very world. It is the sign of the acceptance of our devotions that when praying to God we witness with our spiritual eye that a panacean light descends from God, nullifying the effect of the poisonous matters in our heart, and falling upon us like a flame of fire burns away the carnal desires and fills the heart with certainty and with a holy feeling of love and joy, and opens the breast for receiving truths and

heavenly wisdom. If the mind does not experience these things our worship and devotions are nothing more than lifeless ceremonies. Every prayer, though it be for the removal of our worldly difficulties, casts a benignant influence on our minds. It first strengthens our faith and increases our Divine knowledge, and after granting a security, openness and blissfulness to the minds, it then dispels the gloom of our distresses and banishes our cares and sorrows in one way or another. The mere utterance of a few words does not, therefore, constitute a prayer. A true prayer is that which has actually a magnetic power; and after which a light descends from heaven which dissipates the clouds of our anxieties, and grants us peace and security of mind. It is true that Divine assistance is vouchsafed to us in one of two ways after a true prayer, *viz.*, either the difficulty which would crush us under its weight is altogether removed, or we are granted a supernatural power to bear it and then we find a joy and a bliss in it, and being freed from all uneasiness our breast is opened for its reception. In both cases Divine assistance does certainly come to us after a devout and sincere prayer.

Moreover, when it is admitted that the happiness, felicities and blessings of the next world, which are expressed in the one word "salvation," are obtained by means of prayers, the efficacy of prayers is also admitted; for if our prayer cannot help us in getting

freed from adversities and in the attainment of our objects in this life, there is no reason why they should effect that purpose in the life to come. If prayer has no efficacy in this world, it is absurd to suppose that it will show its efficacy in the next. On the other hand, if we believe in its efficacy in the next, we cannot but admit its efficacy here, so that its manifestation in this very life may strengthen our faith and hope in the next, and we may pray with greater zeal for the blessings of the next life.

There should be a transformation in the prayers, which you perform daily. I see that the prayers of most men are only meaningless movements of the body. Their prayers are not attended with even the fearfulness and the humbleness of heart which may be seen in their supplications after the prayers are ended. It would have been much better if they had urged their entreaties to God while performing their prayers, for in that case they would have found delight and perfect joy in their prayers. I therefore say that, for a time, you should give up the habit of lifting up your hands after your prayers are finished and ask of your Divine Master whatever you have to ask while you are praying, so that you may find bliss in your prayers. You should moreover submit your petitions to God in your own language for in that case there would be greater fervour and enthusiasm in your supplications. So after you have recited the Holy Quran and the forms of the prayer reported from the Holy Prophet, pray to

God in your mother-tongue, for your supplications to God are best and most ardently expressed in that language. What is of essential importance for you to ask of God is that you may be delivered from sins and that God may be pleased with you, for with sins the heart is hardened and the sinful man is really an earthworm. Therefore our constant prayer to God Who holds all powers in His hands, should be that He may release us from sins and show us the path of His pleasure. The true believer lives in this world as if he were a traveller on horseback going in a forest and stopping for a while to take rest under a tree without alighting from the horse, and continuing the journey when relieved a little. But if a traveller were to make a permanent abode in that forest, he must soon be torn by beasts of prey. The true believer does not consider the world to be his home, and for him who does so, God does not care, for He only loves and honours His faithful servants. It is reported from the Holy Prophet that the true believer seeks the nearness of God by نوافل by which are meant, deeds beyond what is incumbent or obligatory upon a person. The man of world slackens his pace after doing a little bit of good but the true believer is always anxious of adding to what he has done. By the نوافل are meant not only supererogatory prayers, but every voluntary addition or accession to obligatory good deeds. There is a desire in the heart of the true believer to do more and more good deeds, and advancing thus in goodness, he comes nearer and nearer to God, while God also comes nearer and nearer to him, until having completely annihilated his own

self, he finds himself under the shadow of God and is illuminated by Divine lights. His eye then becomes the eye of God and his ear the ear of God, for he does not go against the will of God in what he does.

I have often exhorted my followers to establish such a connection, for unless all worldly connections are severed and the heart is dead to the love of the world, the nature of the man must remain devoid of zeal for the love of God. It has been said that the companions of the Holy Prophet used to be so engrossed in their prayers that when they were ended, they could hardly recognise one another. In fact, every true believer should be engrossed in his prayer. According to the Muslim law when a man meets his companions after separation, he must say *السلام عليكم* "Peace be on you." In this lies the secret of ending prayer with *السلام عليكم ورحمة الله*: "Peace be on you and the mercy of God." When a man stands up for prayers and begins his devotions by saying *Allah-o-Akbar*, (God is great), He stands in the Divine presence and is, as it were, removed into another world being absorbed in the contemplation of Divine Glory and Majesty. When the prayers are ended, he comes back into this world and hence at the end he says *السلام عليكم ورحمة الله* "Peace be on you and the mercy of God." Having met his friends after separation. But if only dull ceremonies are gone through without realizing their deep significance, no good can result. Ceremonies are shells in which there is no kernel, and if the deep truths that underlie them are not

realised, they may turn out to be ways of destruction. It is when such truth is realised that a true love for God is generated in the heart and the soul flies to God and is completely engrossed in the contemplation of Divine glory. Every particle of the body in that state serves and obeys God.

There is another point worth mentioning. The Holy Prophet had to depart and thus a great exemplar, the most excellent agency that showed the path to God, had to be taken away from the companions. So they were told : *قل ان كنتم تحبون الله فاتبعوني يحببكم الله* "Say if you love God, then walk in my footsteps and God will love you." Now no one can be the beloved of God except the upright man. To renew and increase the love of the followers for their Holy Master, they were enjoined to invoke Divine blessings on the Holy Prophet, and this was made a part of their prayers so that their love for the upright one should ever be on the increase and thus lead them to uprightness. It is admitted by all Muslims that spiritually the Holy Prophet lives for ever. The *sufis* say that the names of the Reformers are manifestations of the name of the Holy Prophet in some one or other of its aspects. The excellences of prophethood terminated in the perfect Guide, but their manifestation will always continue to appear in the world through the successors of the Holy Prophet till the day of judgment. I say to you truly that even now Almighty God has raised such a one among you. And with His hand He has established a dispensation and sent a Messenger, and he it is who is speaking to you. The mercy of God

has come down upon earth ; therefore pray to Him and ask for uprightness, and invoke the blessings of God on the Holy Prophet for this is the only way to uprightness. Remember the beauties and goodness of the Holy Prophet and pray to God that He may raise his dignity still higher and crown his mission with still greater success. Then will you taste the sweet fruit of the acceptance of prayer, for there are only three ways to it ; firstly, that indicated in the verse *قل ان كنتم تحبون الله فاتبعوني يحببكم الله*

“Say if you love God’ then follow me and God will love you”; secondly, that spoken of in the verse *يا ايها الذين آمنوا صلوا عليه وسلموا تسليما* “O ye faithful ! pray for peace and the blessings of God on the Holy Prophet” ; and thirdly, the grace of God.

Instance of this abound in all holy books and the miracles owe their existence to a great extent to the acceptance of prayer. What was it that happened in the sandy deserts of Arabia ? The dead were raised to life in thousands, the blind were made to see, the dumb were made to utter words of heavenly wisdom, and the depraved of long generations were clothed in Divine morals. The whole peninsula underwent in a few days a transformation which no eye had seen and no ear heard. Ah ! these were the midnight prayers and deep sighs of a perfect one which showed these wonderful works whose execution by a helpless unlearned orphan seemed an impossibility. Pour down Thy favours, blessings and peace upon him,

O God, in as great an abundance as was his grief and anxiety for the welfare of Thy people, and cause the lights of Thine mercy to descend upon him to all eternity !

It must also be borne in mind that there are four reasons for which Almighty God has rendered prayer obligatory upon the Muslims. Firstly, that by turning to God at all times and in all states, we may acquire firmness in our faith in the Divine unity, for our entreaties to God are equivalent to our confession that He is the sole Giver of all gifts. Secondly, that on the acceptance of our prayer and the attainment of the object prayed for, our faith in God may be strengthened. Thirdly, that if Divine assistance comes in any other way, our knowledge and wisdom may be increased. Fourthly, that if the acceptance of our prayer is promised to us by means of inspiration or visions and it comes to pass exactly in the same manner, one may advance in Divine knowledge, and attain from knowledge to certainty, from certainty to love and from love to a total freedom from sin, and an entire severance of all connections besides our connection with God, and thus obtain the fruit of true salvation. But if our objects are attained independently of prayer and a veil hides the face of God from us, the fulfilment of our desires becomes ultimately a source of grief and anxiety for us, and every success which was deemed at first a pleasure becomes a sorrow. But the sight and knowledge which are granted through prayer and the blessings which are bestowed upon us from the heavenly

treasure, never diminish or decline. On the other hand, advancing day by day in Divine love and knowledge, a man will ascend by this holy ladder of prayers to the pinnacles of bliss.

It is, therefore, necessary for the seeker after truth that he should try to obtain, in right earnest, such true faith. The mere fact that he is a Muslim and hates *shirk* (polytheism) and says his prayers, is not sufficient to release him from the bondage of sin or make him attain salvation. Only he will find true salvation and supreme delight and perfect bliss after death who has found in this very life the true and living light which turns a man with all his faculties, inclinations and desires, to God, and mortifying all earthly desires works a pure transformation in his soul. And what is this true and living light? It is nothing but a certainty of Divine existence, and a perfect Divine knowledge. It is the heavenly power which its powerful hand draws a man out of the dangerous and dark pit of slavery to passion, and seats him in an open space where there is light and safety. Before this light is obtained, a man's virtuous deeds are only formalities in obedience to custom, and the slightest trial is apt to stumble him. Without certainty a man's relation with God cannot be clear. But the man to whom certainty is given flows towards God like water, flies to Him faster than the wind, burns like fire every thing foreign to God, and bears every suffering with patience and steadfastness like earth. It is a sweet syrup which, as soon as it is taken, sweetens the whole body. It is a delicious milk which makes a man indifferent to the dainties of

the world. But it is found only by means of true and devout prayers in which a man completely annihilates himself. It is obtained no doubt, but arduous is the task and narrow the path! Is there any one who would undertake this task and seek this path?